February 1998 **ISSUE 60**

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT PC GAMES!

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PC ZONE

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FLIGHT SIM EXTRAVAGANZA

Reviewed and rated:
F-22 ADF, F-22 Raptor
and Flight Unlimited II

THE LIONHEAD DIARIES

Peter Molyneux's
new team unveiled

DAIKATANA

Latest report plus
exclusive news
of the sequel!

FREESPACE: THE GREAT WAR

Descent meets X-Wing in
Interplay's new shooter

SIN PART 2

Potential Quake-killer
nears completion

EXCLUSIVE!

Hands-on preview
of LucasArts' new
strategy game

STAR WARS SUPREMACY

Even more Star Wars
FIRST SCREENSHOTS OF
JEDI KNIGHT:
MYSTERIES OF SITH!

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

PLUS!

IF YOUR COVERMOUNT IS MISSING PLEASE CONSULT YOUR NEWSAGENT

Everything you ever wanted to know about Jedi Knight and Age Of Empires but were too afraid to ask...

ALAN SHEARER ON ACTUA AND WORLD CUP 98

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Sensible
SOCCER
2000
™

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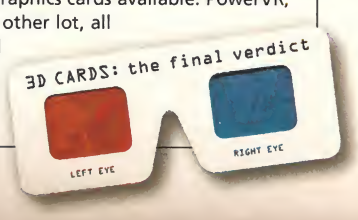

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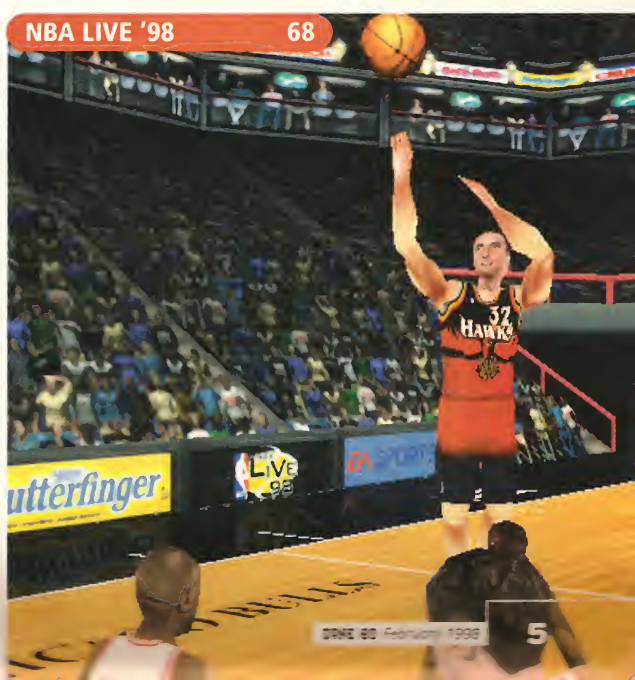

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CD ZONE

On the disc

This month we've jammed over 20 fully playable demos including some cracking EXCLUSIVE titles such as the excellent *Sid Meier's Gettysburg*, the awesome *F1 Racing Simulation* and the fantastic *Wing Commander: Prophecy* onto the CD. Be sure to check out the EXCLUSIVE *X-Men Quake* TC we've squeezed on for all you *Quake* addicts, and don't forget to e-mail us at the address to the left if you have problems running our new browser.

As there's only one DOS demo this month, we've dispensed with its install instructions. Install *Cobra Gunship* by running the dosdemos.bat program.

MINIMUM SPECIFICATION

You'll need at least a Pentium 133 with 16Mb RAM to run the software on this month's CD-ROM.

Many of the programs are designed to run under Windows 95 and, as a result, some of them may require a Pentium 166 with 32Mb RAM to run satisfactorily. Please note that some games also require a 3D accelerator card to run.

Use the browser and menu system to see which demos are Windows 95, DOS and 3D accelerator only.

Help!

CD trouble? HD playing up? Don't worry – phone our helpline and sort yourself out pronto!

HD DISK HELP

Phone Matthew on 01274 736990
Any week day between 9am and 4pm

CD-ROM HELP

Phone ABT on 01708 250250 or pczone@abt-net.demon.co.uk
Any week day between 11am and 5pm
(Please DO NOT phone the *PC Zone* office as your calls will NOT be answered)

If you are calling either helpline, then please take note of the following points:

- If possible have your PC operating and near to the phone when you call.
- If this is not possible, note down all relevant information ie system type, sound card, RAM etc, plus the nature of the fault.
- Make sure you have a pen and paper to hand when you call to jot down the relevant info.

No CD?

If you don't have the CD issue, then fear not! Simply fill out this slip, enclose your HDs from the cover plus a cheque for a whole £1 and send it to:

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CDs from previous issues are also available.

SID MEIER'S GETTYSBURG

Electronic Arts

EXCLUSIVE!

AMERICANS KILLING EACH other may be nothing new, but a couple of hundred years ago the sport was positively encouraged. Relive those days in this EXCLUSIVE three-scenario demo in which you must guide your Yankee cohorts against the forces of the South. We advise you to take a peek at the game's README file to understand the concepts behind the game.

Controls: Mouse/keyboard

REGIMENTAL COMMANDS:

C	Form column
L	Form line
S	Skirmishers
PG UP / HOME	Wheel right/left
W (+ mouse)	Wheel to cursor
A	Advance
SHIFT 1	Charge
H	Hold
Q	Double quick
SHIFT 8	Attach
F	Fall back
R	Retreat
V	Volley
[ ]	Halt
SHIFT X	Detach from brigade
SHIFT /	Line of sight
G (+ mouse)	Don't stop
O (+ mouse)	Oblique

BRIGADE COMMANDS (ADDITIONAL):

B	Form battle formation
D	Form double line
M	Manoeuvre
R	Road
SHIFT X	Attach all regiments
SHIFT R	Rally troops
SHIFT . / ,	Refuse line, left/right

BATTERY COMMANDS (ADDITIONAL):

C / L	Limber/unlimber
F	Fall back firing

GAME CONTROLS:

Z / X	Zoom in/out
SHIFT C	Centre map
P	Pause
+ / -	Speed up/slow down
ESC	Exit scenario
SHIFT L	Load
SHIFT S	Save
TAB	Next regiment
F1	Map
F2	Find fighting
F3	Find largest objective
F4	Last important point
F5	Scenario status
F6	Order of battle
F7	Courier messages
F8	Battle summary

F1 RACING SIM Ubi Soft

QUITE THE MOST INSPIRED piece of game naming since Microsoft's *Flight Simulator* hit the shelves. Still, it looks and plays fabulous, and you lucky chaps have the opportunity to see why we moistened out cockpits playing this excellent game. Five laps of Italy's Monza circuit are available for you to race around, and you get to drive Michael Schumacher's car which means you can go charging about without a care in the world.

Controls: Keyboard/joystick

←/→	Steer left/right
A/Z	Accelerate/brake
SPACE/CTRL	Gear up/down
F1	Help
F2	Playable view
F3	Realistic view
F4	Different views
F5	Current grading
F6	Differences
F7	Auto/manual gearbox
P	Pause
ESC	Quit

FIFA 98: RTWC EA Sports

FINALLY, EA SPORTS MAY HAVE come up with a decent footy game. It looks superb and plays almost as well, although the consensus here in the *PC Zone* office is that *Actua Soccer 2* is better. You can see for yourself which you prefer in this one-half demo between England and Italy.

Controls: Keyboard/joypad

↑←↓→	Run
S	Pass
D	Shoot/tackle
A	Lob/slide tackle
W	Sprint
CTRL/ALT	Skill moves (with other keys)

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ACHTUNG SPITFIRE

(Avalon Hill)

Take to the skies in our continuing series of cover-mounted turn-based strategy games. Hang on... turn based, with planes? Well, it may seem odd, but no more peculiar than four aliens with TV sets for tummies taking over the airwaves. The associated README file has all the details.

Controls: Mouse/keyboard

ALT S	Save game
ALT Q	Quit
ALT M	Suggest a move
ALT D	Disengage
ALT W	Quickly finish combat
ALT Z	Change zoom
ALT K	Sky background
ALT F	Faster movement
ALT A	Show altitude colour code circles
ALT B	Show airplane database
ALT R	Show network radio window

AIR WARRIOR III (I-Magic)

Fly an off-line mission in this, the third in the hugely popular on-line flight sim series. The full game will feature many different planes from many different eras. You don't have quite so much choice in the demo, though. The featured mission is with those sexually deviant US navy flyers, the Jolly Rogers. Remember to keep an eye on your six. Note: you will need a joystick or mouse for directional control.

Controls: Mouse/keyboard/joystick

C/V	Throttle up/down
.	Landing gear
F5-F7	View modes
[/]	Sights zoom in/out
B	Bomb
A/S/D	Left/centre/right rudder
,/.	Raise/lower flaps
X	Autopilot
	Brakes
F1	Show keys
F2	Radio buffer
F10	Radar
+/-	Time compression
Keypad 8 4 6 2	View

F-22 RAPTOR (NovaLogic)

NovaLogic's latest flight sim surprised us all by having great multi-player action but no stonking 3D accelerated graphics. This demo allows you to try your hand against opponents on NovaLogic's game server, novaworld. Those without a squealing modem can try their air combat skills against the might of the Angolan People's Liberation Army who are understandably miffed at being equipped with rusty old Soviet MiGs with which to defend themselves.

Controls: Mouse/keyboard/joystick

↑←↓→	Directional control
M	Mission goals
G	Landing gear up/down
PG DN / DELETE	Rudder left/right
B	Brake
CONTROL J	Eject
,/.	HUD dim/brighten
F1-F8	Views
CONTROL S/X	Zoom in/out
R	Radar on/off
F	Flare
.	Cycle weapons
A	Autopilot
N	Cycle nav points
L	Auto-levelling
H	Home
F9-F12	Time compression
6-0	Thrust select
BACKSPACE	Afterburner
	Fire selected weapon
Keypad 2	Stores display
Keypad 4	Defence display
Keypad 5	Nav display
Keypad 6	Attack display
Keypad 7	Systems status
Keypad 8	Nav overlays
Keypad 9	Artificial horizon
TAB / CONTROL	Cycle/reverse targets
TAB	Prev/next target
[/]	Build shoot list
ENTER	

MANX TT SUPERBIKE (Sega)

Pretend you're Barry Sheen with this one-lap demo of Sega's motorcycle racer, in which the aim is to get your kneecaps as close to the scudding tarmac as possible without losing them. For added realism, why not run into some oncoming traffic to complete the cyborg effect?

Controls: Keyboard/gamepad

←→	Tilt left/right
X/C	Throttle/brake
↑↓	Gear up/down
Left SHIFT	Fast bank
Left CONTROL	Hold bank
C	Change view

HD ZONE

PLATEAU (Shareware)

We've thought long and hard, but quite why a game that combines Connect 4 with Draughts should call itself *Plateau* remains a complete mystery. Perhaps it's because you have to build a stack of six counters or destroy your opponent's stacks, or perhaps it's just because the developers thought it was a pretty cool name to use. We think that *Piles* would have been a much more suitable name, but we're sure you'll prefer it if we don't go into our reasons.

Controls: Mouse

SHADOW MASTER (Psygnosis)

You know that 3Dfx card that you got for Christmas? You know, the one still in the box because you're too scared to open up your PC. Well, here's the perfect excuse to bury your head in the instruction manual and see what that baby can do. This *Doom*-buggy action game looks the business. NB: 3Dfx only.

Controls: Keyboard/joystick/gamepad/wheel/mouse

CONTROL / ENTER / ALT	Fire primary weapon
SHIFT	Fire secondary weapon
	Fire primary & secondary weapons simultaneously
	Secondary weapon select
↑←↓→	Directional control
,/Z	Thrust left
./X	Thrust right
PG UP / PG DN	Look up/down
PG UP & PG DN	Centre screen
L	Lens flare on/off
6-0	Select control method
ESC	Pause/menu

LORDS OF MAGIC (CUC)

This sequel to *Lords Of The Realm II* continues the successful fantasy strategy series by featuring all the usual Tolkien-esque characters, exploration, combat and resource management. The result is a bit like the classic *Warlords III*, with combat similar to *X-COM 3*. The demo ends after about 20 turns, by which time you should be charging at top speed on your way to the shops to demand a copy. For full instructions, have a butchers at the README file that accompanies the demo.

Controls: Keyboard/mouse

LMB	Select unit
RMB	Deselect unit

WING COMMANDER: PROPHECY Origin/EA

IF LAST MONTH'S *PROPHECY* DEMO teased and tantalised you with its gaming cleavage, then this month's new offering should have you foaming at the mouth. Full-frontal action featuring new aliens and four exclusive missions unavailable even in the retail version – bananarama.

Controls:
Joystick/mouse/keyboard

↑ ← ↓ →	Turn and pitch
Q / W	Roll left/right
TAB	Afterburner
+ / -	Increase/decrease throttle
\ / BACKSPACE	Full speed/stop
A	Autopilot
N	Nav toggle
G	Cycle through guns
SPACE	Fire guns
M	Cycle through missiles
ENTER	Fire missiles
T	Cycle targets
L	Lock targets
U	Target nearest enemy
Y	Match target speed
I	Target under recticle
R	Target next component
E	Drop decoy
C	Communications VDU
D	Damage VDU
P	Power VDU
CTRL F4	Rear cam VDU
S	Adjust shields
F1 - F12	Camera views

WINGMAN COMMANDS:

ALT A	Attack my target
ALT B	Break and attack
ALT F	Form on my wing
ALT H	Help me out
ALT D	Request status
ALT T	Taunt target
ALT M	Keep radio silence
ALT L	Lift radio silence

F1	Key list
R	Party report
+ / -	Next/previous unit
Z	Overland view
X	Regional view
C	World view
I	Intelligence report
. / ,	Increase/decrease game speed
/	Default game speed
CONTROL S	Save
CONTROL L	Load
CONTROL X	Exit
CONTROL O	Options

NBA ACTION '98 (Sega)

As far as the vertically challenged among us go, the sport of basketball will only serve to remind them of the ribbing they received at school for being so underdeveloped. Those over five foot would congregate around the shortest sprat in the playground, steal his satchel and launch it into high orbit. Those of us without remorse can just get on with enjoying this demo.

Controls: Keyboard/gamepad

↑ ← ↓ →	Movement
Z	Drive/duke/alley-oop/steal
X	Pass/swap
C	Shoot/rebound/block
A	Turbo
S	Swap/set pick/hand up/dn
D	Playcall
SPACE	Pass/call for pass/foul
Left SHIFT	Step mod

TUMBLEBUGS (Voxar)

Don't be fooled by the cutesy title and colourful graphics – you'll soon find that they disguise a hideously addictive two-player game. Players control hover cars that bob about the hilly landscape in pursuit of the other. It's pretty straightforward – the aim is simply to turn your opponent's vehicle, be it human or computer controlled, into a smouldering heap of twisted metal. Nice.

Controls: Keyboard

Keypad 4 6	Left/right (P1)
S F	Left/right (P2)
Keypad 8	Thrust (P1)
E	Thrust (P2)
CONTROL	Fire (P1)
Z	Fire (P2)
Keypad 7	Special (P1)
A	Special (P2)

CART PRECISION RACING (Microsoft)

The Billy Gates Games Co have released a couple of excellent titles recently, and to continue this tradition they've come up with this driving sim based on America's IndyCar racing season. The track on offer is Laguna Seca and the driver is none other than Mark Blundell. Decide for yourself whether Microsoft can finally be forgiven for the evil that was *Microsoft Soccer*.

Controls: Keyboard/joystick/wheel

Num 4 / 6	Turn left/right
Num 8 / 2	Accelerate/brake
R	Reverse
\	Toggle mirrors
D	Toggle dashboard
M	Toggle map
O	Pit board
TAB	Pi page
F5	Racing line
F6	Steering help
F7	Auto shift
F8	Spin correction
F9	Auto brake
X	Crash damage
V	Switch camera
K	Next car

JACK NICKLAUS 5 (Accolade)

He may be getting on a bit, but like *Star Trek*'s Fatboy Shatner, Jack 'The Bear' Nicklaus still likes to make regular appearances to show us he's still alive and well and able to knock about a few balls unaided. In this demo, three holes are available for you to play about with.

Controls: Keyboard/mouse

← / →	Aiming
↑ / ↓	Intensity
CONTROL ← / →	Draw/fade shot
CONTROL ↑ / ↓	Low/high shot
SPACE	Swing meter/make shot

SPARKLER (Freeware)

Ask any student to do something vaguely useful and they'll probably end up ambling through Hyde Park complaining vociferously about their self-inflicted financial burdens while collecting traffic cones on the way. Not so this bunch, who obviously thought that humanity would be much better served if they found out how their newly bought 3Dfx cards worked. The result was this old skool-style gameplay. Nice one, guys – now go out and get a job you state-sponging wasters. 3Dfx cards only (doh).

Controls: Keyboard/joystick

↑ ← ↓ →	Steer the ship
SHIFT	Fire photons
Z	Fire auxiliary
P	Pause
ESC	Quit

WARBREEDS

(Red Orb Entertainment)

It just wouldn't be right having a cover disc without a real-time strategy game. To make up for the usual dearth of *C&C* wannabes we've got this little number that allows you to do a bit of genetic engineering on the side. The demo features the basic training campaign from the full version so you can get to grips with the basics, thus saving time when you get your hands on the retail version. Use the mouse to select and direct.

Controls: Keyboard/mouse

ESC	Toggle main menu
SHIFT	Fast scroll/select multiple units
	Hold down to keep unit formation while moving units
A	Auto-target closest enemy
F	Flash ID colours
Z	Zoom in/out
E	Select all units in view window
S	Stop current unit/s
N	Next unit
M	Toggle mini-map
L	Toggle follow-lock mode
O	Toggle power zone viewing mode
HOME	Centre current selection
TAB	Hold down to set waypoints
CONTROL 0-9	Assign teams to current selected units
0-9	Select team 0-9
CONTROL X	Explore map
CONTROL ALT K	Die die die
H	Set horizontal line formation
V	Set vertical line formation
/\	Diagonal formation
[ ]	Rotate selection 90°
CONTROL F1-F8	Save formation
F1-F8	Use saved formation
Y	Options

SEGA NOTE:

Sega, SegaPC, Virtua, Virtua Cop and Virtua Fighter are trademarks of Sega Enterprises, Ltd. All Rights Reserved.

COBRA GUNSHIP

(Elysium Digital)

This 2D arcade shoot 'em up has elements of classics like *Chopper Command*, *Defender* and *SWIV*. The five-level demo won't win any awards for its graphics, but it at least deserves a £5 book token for being simple and fun.

Controls: Keyboard/mouse/joystick

↑←↓→	Move chopper
E	Flip direction
S	Select primary weapon
F	Select secondary weapon
	Fire primary weapon
D	Fire secondary

SONIC 3D (Sega)

Sega have taken their ring-collecting mascot, *Sonic The Hedgehog*, and given him an isometric make-over in the hope that PC owners might take to him the way Megadrive owners did all those years ago. If you don't take him to your heart, take him to the central reservation of the M4 where he belongs.

Controls: Keyboard/joystick

↑←↓→	Movement
ENTER	Pause
SHIFT /	Jump/blast attack
CONTROL	Sonic spin dash

SUB CULTURE (Ubi Soft)

A strange and beautiful world exists under the ocean waves, although you won't have time to admire the fishes because you have to rescue a group of minors trapped in caves. Start the demo by going to the nearby city where you'll be told what to do.

Controls: Keyboard/joystick

↑←↓→	Heading & pitch
A / Z	Forward/backward
S / X	Strafe up/down
+ / -	Cycle weapons
	Fire
[ ] / [ ]	Cycle tools
CONTROL	Activate tools
F1-F4	Camera views
F6	Briefing/map
F7	Message history

VIRTUA COP 2 (Sega)

At last the arcade classic comes to the PC, though sadly without the plastic gun. Still, you can use your mouse to shoot the bad guys – just pretend it's a lethal weapon.

Controls: Mouse/keyboard

PLAYER 1:

W S A D	Move sights
V	Fire
H (twice)	Reload
G	Speed up
	Start

PLAYER 2:

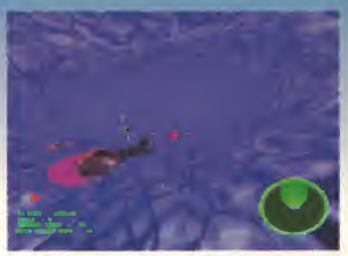
↑↓←→	Move sights
Keypad 0	Fire
Keypad 3 (twice)	Reload
Keypad 2	Speed up
ENTER	Start

STAR COMMAND DELUXE

(Metropolis)

A real-time strategy game set in the depths of space, where four very different racers battle for control of the universe. Choose one, build a few ships and go see what's out there. Use your mouse to select units and move them across the map.

Controls: Mouse



WINDS OF ZOLARIA

(ABTS Intelligence Games)

A puzzle game where you have to divert the emissions of the Princess Zolaria, who's been gorging on sprouts for seven years. It's true – honest.

Two multi-player levels and four ships are available for split-screen action, and there's a single-player section for those without mates. 3Dfx only.

Controls: Keyboard/joystick

Keypad 4 / 6	Roll left/right
Keypad 7 / 9	Bank left/right
Keypad 2 / 8	Up/down
+ / -	Speed up/down
	Fire
M	Missiles

DAYTONA USA DELUXE

(Sega)

As Sega Saturn sales figures sink without a trace, its games seem to be hoping the PC lifeboat will come along and give them the kiss of life. See if you think Sega's arcade racing game deserves a lifeline in this two-lap demo.

Controls: Keyboard/joystick

←/→	Steer left/right
↑/↓	Gear up/down
X/Z	Accelerate/brake
C	Change view

ADD-ONS

Two excellent *Quake* conversions. First, two levels from *X-Men: Ravages Of Apocalypse*, a *Quake* TC based on the *Marvel* comic characters. The setup file will extract files to c:\temp\xmen directory where you can run the setup.exe file to play it. *Omen II* is a new *Quake* chapter that will be installed to c:\quake\omen2 where you must run the TC with the command line quake -game omen2. Also on the disc is a 3Dfx patch for *Lands Of Lore: Guardians Of Destiny*, as well as add-ons for *NASCAR Racing II* and *FIFA Soccer Manager*.

MYTH

THE FALLEN LORDS

"IF YOU CAN KEEP YOUR HEAD WHILE ALL OTHERS ARE LOSING THEIRS....
YOU'VE PROBABLY ONLY BEEN PLAYING MYTH FOR 5 SECONDS"

SO WHILE YOU'VE GOT A HEAD, USE IT - GET YOUR HANDS ON MYTH NOW!

"It's brutal, it's bloody but it's brilliant...bloody brilliant"
PC GAMING WORLD 5/5
PLAY IT AWARD

"Don't myth thyth one... this game rules"
PC HOME 93%

"This is a class game, very challenging ...you should get hours and hours out of this"
ULTIMATE PC 90%

AVAILABLE TO BUY ON PC CD-ROM
JANUARY '98

BUNGIE

PUBLISHER OF THE YEAR 1997
EIDOS

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BULLETIN

DATAPAD

Spaced-out hardcore babes

Perfect Entertainment's forthcoming releases have a certain sexiness about them. Take *Space Babes*, a kind of

HOTLINE
When all the big games are due out

PAGE 17

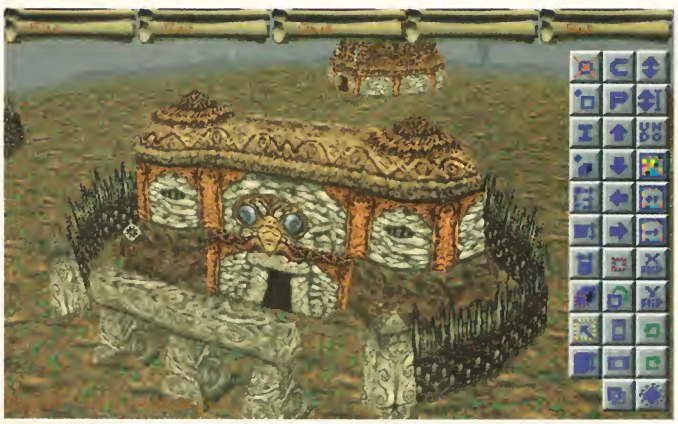
SPECIAL REPORT
What everyone got up to at the *PC Zone* Awards

PAGE 19

HOTSHOTS
The latest screenshots from the hottest games

PAGE 26

Up a gear for Gremlin



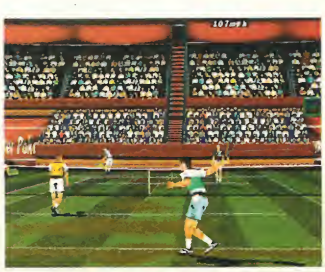
***Motörhead*: Pushing up the ante, I know you wanna see me, read 'em and weep – the dead man's hand again... I see it in your eyes, take one look and die!**

Last year saw Gremlin making a worthwhile contribution to the PC gaming scene with the likes of the excellent *Realms Of The Haunting* and *Actua Soccer 2*, but 1998 will see them move up a gear with a host of big releases.

April will be a busy time for Yorkshire-based developers Gremlin Interactive. Not only will they have the likes of *Actua Tennis*, *Actua Golf II* and *Buggy* jockeying for release, but they'll also have a brand-new motor racing game in the shops at the same time.

Motorhead – as the game will be known – is a futuristic racing game that Gremlin describe as being "really, really, really, really, really fast". To keep frame rates high (important in precision racing games, as Gremlin's designers realise), *Motorhead*'s polygon graphics have been simplified by reducing textures and implementing clever lighting and shading techniques. As you can see from these beautifully coloured screenshots, it seems to have worked very well. The game will also support 3Dfx and PowerVR, plus eight-player link-up over eight different tracks.

Later on in the year – late summer to be (sort of) precise – we'll see *Tribal Lore*, a tribe-building resource management/Celtic mysticism game. Using a sophisticated mix of polygons and sprites, *Tribal Lore* takes elements of *C&C* and *Age Of Empires* and weaves them into a sort of *Myth* with Celtic armband tattoos. If you get what we mean.



(Above) Game, set and match to Gremlin in '98? (Right) Paul Green's *RPG*: will it be better than *ROTH*?

November will mark the release of Paul Green's forthcoming epic role-playing adventure *RPG* (and not *Untitled: The Return* as other magazines have called it). As the bloke behind last year's brilliant *Realms Of The Haunting*, Paul and his team are this time working to surpass what they achieved with *ROTH*. *RPG* introduces a brand-new 'true' 3D system (an updated version of the *Actua Soccer 2* engine, we're told) which will be used to portray the story in its entirety (au revoir, FMV). The player will be able to free-roam vast 3D lands in the third person (*Tomb Raider*-stylee), killing monsters, solving puzzles and robbing magical items on the way.

The game's designers have also created a new magic system for the game, based around the elements of fire, air, water and earth, plus a fifth element called 'Sensoo' – an essence which apparently occupies every part of the known universe. Sounds weird, but then it's this inherent weirdness that makes Paul Green games so good. We'll have more on all these new announcements very soon.

cosmic *Charlie's Angels* in which a gaggle of gorgeous gals hop from planet to planet showing their cleavage and saving the day. It's a graphic adventure and, like *Indiana Jones And The Fate Of Atlantis*, will probably involve the use of a whip somewhere along the way. Then there's *Hard Corp* – featuring full-on penetrating camera angles and plenty of mustachioed, hairy men, no doubt. Happily/sadly (delete as appropriate) the letter 'p' stands in the way of a pixel-pervert's wet dream – making way for a tank-based shoot 'em up instead. Thankfully, developers Graftgold are employing an "if you can see something, you can destroy it" philosophy, so it should be something of a laugh. *Hard Corp* will be out in the spring.

Gary Lineker, Chris Waddle and Kenneth Wolstenhome (the man who said "They think it's all over... It is now," in the 1966 final) provide the commentary in *World Cup 98*.

EA in micturate withdrawal shock

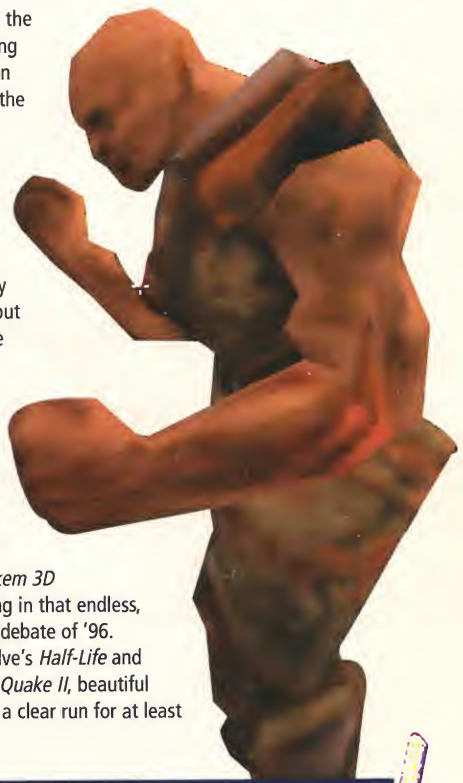
No longer will people moan about Electronic Arts churning out the same game every year – largely because they now seem to have adopted a policy of churning out the same game every four months. Yes, only days after their release of *FIFA 98: Road To World Cup*, EA have announced the arrival in May of the strangely familiar-sounding *World Cup 98*.

Where *FIFA 98* allowed you to battle through the qualifying groups and into the Finals proper, *World Cup 98* deals only with the Finals. The plan seems to be that you'll fork out another 35 quid for what's essentially the same game, thanks largely to the new "classic" teams from the past (England '66, Brazil '70, etc). Oh, and it will boast "star player moves" (what is this, basketball?) and – whoop-de-doo – a trivia quiz. Taking the piss? Extracting the urine? Withdrawing the micturate? You decide...

Quake II, Duke Nukem 0

You can please all of the people all of the time, but only with *Quake II*.

"*Quake II* is the most impressive game I have ever played on a computer." So said John Romero, ex-iD commandant and now owner and president of Ion Storm, after playing *Quake II* to the end. A mighty compliment indeed from the man who has never stopped playing *Quake*, and a compliment utterly in sync with the views of the rest of the on-line community.

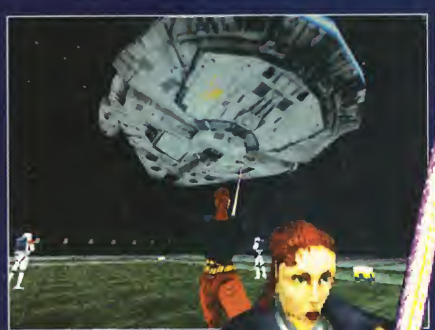


Reactions in newsgroups and on gaming websites has been universally positive. Despite a few salient points about the rather tacked-on network game and the healthy flotilla of bugs (try this one: fall from a great height but press 'jump' just before hitting the ground), *QII* has been a massive success, flying off the shelves and already generating a rash of new levels and monsters.

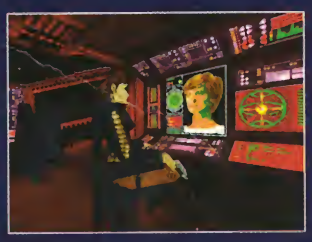
To be fair, the glory of the reaction is probably due in part to the lack of a major rival game in the marketplace. When *Quake* came out it had to fight *Duke Nukem 3D* for top place in the charts, resulting in that endless, tedious '*Duke* rules. *Quake* sucks' debate of '96. This year, Romero's *Daikatana*, Valve's *Half-Life* and Ritual's *SiN* have slipped to April. *Quake II*, beautiful work of art though it may be, has a clear run for at least three months.

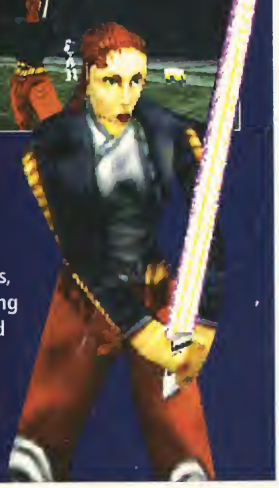
Ms Jedi Knight

The ever-lovely LucasArts have just announced a forthcoming collection of hand-crafted add-on levels for the exceedingly popular *Jedi Knight*.



Set some five years after the climax of the original *Jedi Knight*, the *Mysteries Of The Sith* mission pack will see the introduction of a new playable character called Mara Jade. *Mysteries* also features a new arsenal (freeze gun, anybody?), 20 new beasties, a new selection of tip-top Jedi magic tricks, and some improved lighting effects. With 14 single and 15 multi-player levels, it sounds like this could be worth keeping an eye out for.





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PRESENTS...

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"...The master of the genre..."
-PC GAMER. GAME OF THE MONTH. 94%

"...Graphically, Total Annihilation beats the opposition to the floor with tremendous force..."
-PC GAMER.

"...Total Annihilation smacks of a classic, not just among real-time strategy games, but among PC games in general..."
-PC REVIEW. 9/10

"...This is it. The game that finally dumps on Red Alert from a great height..."
-PC GAMER.

"...The Robots and laser encampments of the two warring sci-fi armies seem so real you could almost pick them up..."
-PC REVIEW. RECOMMENDED AND INNOVATION AWARD. 9/10

"...Instantly playable and subtly challenging..."
-PC FORMAT.

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Designed for Microsoft Windows 95

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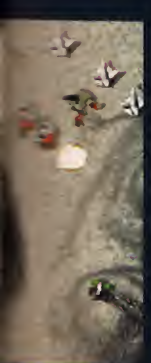

Enter the world of Wireplay

Wireplay, the games network from BT, enables you to locate other players of Total Annihilation™ all over the country.

Take on a whole group of friends and other players. Battle your way across the landscapes.

Wireplay
The games network from BT

www.wireplay.com

DATAPAD

Repellent insects

Imagine the scene: you're whisked from bed – where you were no doubt up to no good – by space aliens, thrown into a purpose-built arena, given a laser and told you're here to represent the human race and will be fighting for your life. They didn't even give you time to change out of your jim-jams – so all the other supreme alien fighters will have a good laugh at your expense. If insects can laugh, that is. Because they're all scary, oversized bugs – fleas, spiders, wasps, etc – and they've got guns. We're talking violent fight-to-the-death city, basically. It's called *Dead Reckoning*, but we've no news of publishers or owt like.

It's Take 2, babe-eh-eh

Publishers Take 2 Interactive Software have announced three new titles, we'll have you know.

Carry On Behind with *Lula – The Sexy Empire*. Show us yer bum!

Of most interest to readers with onanistic inclinations will be Take 2's smutty point-and-click adventure, *Lula – The Sexy Empire*, in which you'll be able (it says here) "to combine the two essentials in life – business and porn". You control Lula, a young 'laydee' who wants to be a porn star and run her own sperm-soaked empire. Starting off as a humble hooker who blackmails her clients, you'll click your way through cartoon-style graphics, "never-before seen sexual positions" and bare-breasted FMV sequences galore. It's from German publishers CDV, the team responsible for 21st Century's truly shite *It's A Funny Old Game* – so the humour will be up to the mark.

Next up is *Armour Command*, the latest offering from Edward Kilham, who was involved in *X-Wing*, *TIE Fighter* and *MechWarrior 2*. Another intergalactic 3D strategy/combat game, it's set – as you'd expect given Kilham's pedigree – in the distant future in a valiant-Terran-Forces-versus-powerful-Alien-Armada scenario, and it's scheduled for release in February.

Lastly, there's a mission disk for the popular strategy game *Dark Colony*. *Council War* is its (odd) name, and it gives you ten new human and alien campaigns, an extra fighting unit per side and some new indigenous species – all for just £14.99.

(Above inset) More *Dark Colony* missions with a new add-on pack called *Council War*. (Above) It's *Armour Command*, innit?

Croft Unoriginal

All said and done, *Space Bunnies* does look like a good laugh.

Guess what? Lara Croft/*Tomb Raider* bandwagon-jumping games are coming apace, whether they're straight attempts to duplicate the game, or 'humorous' variations. *Space Bunnies Must Die* will be one of the latter, featuring an attack from space by alien rabbits. There's a bird in the main role (gasp!), and she isn't wearing many clothes. (Hu-wha-?...) The game is viewed from a "*Tomb Raider*-like perspective" (urk!... akpth!...my ... *heart*...!), with action and adventure elements. (Voices off: "Crash team! Cardiac arrest in Room 11!" "Get the de-fib paddles!" "Clear!" [Whomp!"] "Gimme 200!" "Clear!" [Whomp!] "300!" "Clear!" [Whomp!]... [Beeeeeeeeeeeeeee...] "It's no good... we've lost him...")

Oh alright, then, it's not that surprising.

Skid marks? Skid marks?!

There's room for a top drawer bike racing game on the PC. Let's hope this is the one...

Aren't you glad you bought a 3D accelerator card? Ubi Soft certainly are, because their new motorbike racing game, *Red Line Racer*, makes full use of the tricky little beejasus things. As a result there are eight circuits, set in four different beautifully appointed landscapes, with arcade-quality graphics leaping about the screen as if you're down the end of a pier with a pocket full of pound coins and a luke-warm can of Fanta in your pocket.

There are different views – including the scary-sounding Visor Cam – and you'll even be able to break your wrist in heavy collisions thanks to Force Feedback compatibility. Let's just hope they haven't introduced any special skin-stripping sub-routines. The graphical splendour will include sparks, smoke, weather conditions and... skid marks. All that technology and all their twisted minds can think of is showing close-ups of racers' underwear. It makes you wonder, doesn't it? Look out for *Red Line Racer* around February time.

Fox in micturate withdrawal shock

Having seen how much dosh EA Sports rake in, sister company Fox Interactive are to launch a specialist sports range of their own in order to get in on the update frenzy, so expect a salvo of football games (soccer, American and Shinty), a basketball game, a darts simulator ("What a sport!"), and suchlike. Although there is some speculation as to how this launch will affect EA's own brand (John Madden – face of EA's *Madden Football* – is currently under contract with the Fox television network), sports fans in Europe needn't worry – only four US releases (these being the Stateside releases of Gremlin's new *Actua* sports games) have so far been announced. Whether Fox Sports Interactive make it over the pond in anything other than import form remains to be seen, and at the end of the day who cares who it comes from as long as it's good?

Envelope pushers

***Out Of The Void* is described as** a 'space shooter' and it looks a little bit like this *(use eyes to look at screenshots)*. It's being developed by GameFx, who claim to be "pushing the envelope" of gaming by employing the latest in 3D acceleration hardware. They also purport to be striving "to raise the quality of gaming for everyone riding the technology wave". Erm, cheers.

The game is set on an asteroid, where life is an endless round of drudgery, each moribund day drifting pointlessly into the next. Just like real life, in fact.

Out Of The Void is currently looking rather flippin' smart (look at those shots!), so should be worth a dabble whenever it makes it over here.

Return Fire returns

The long-awaited sequel to *Return Fire* is currently shaping up nicely, as these action shots ably demonstrate.

Again developed by Silent Software/Prolific Publishing, *Return Fire 2* promises yet another new 3D engine, this one capable of creating dynamic and realistic graphics as well as high-quality rendered objects. The game will provide full support for 3D accelerator cards and also for joysticks, including Microsoft's Force Feedback.

As well as the solo game, up to 16 players will be able to compete over a LAN or using th'Internet. An action strategy affair, there will be a host of new vehicles to command, including helicopters, Jeeps, tanks, aircraft carriers, boats and jets. Vehicles and forces will be controlled from either an immersible first-person view or the more strategic chase view, and action will take place over varied terrains, including jungle, desert and urban decay. We'll have more shots and info next month.

(Left) Picking the bones out of that one.
(Above) Familiar split-screen environment.

HOT Line

Tracking the hottest games and their current release dates

TIMELINE

FEBRUARY
- HEDZ (Hasbro)
- Mysteries Of The Sith (LucasArts)

MARCH
- Half-Life (Sierra)
- Populous III (EA)
- SiN (Activision)
- The X-Files (Fox Interactive)

APRIL
- Daikatana (Eidos)
- Grim Fandango (LucasArts)
- Incoming (Rage)
- ST: First Contact (MicroProse)
- Tanktics (BMG)
- Unreal (GT Interactive)

MAY
- Blade (Gremlin)
- Descent FreeSpace (Interplay)
- Earthsiege 3 (Sierra)
- EBT Tank (DID)
- Grand Prix Legends (Sierra)

JUNE
- The Dark Project (Eidos)
- Duke Nukem 4 Ever (GT Interactive)
- Falcon 4.0 (MicroProse)
- FIFA: World Cup 98 (EA Sports)
- Gabriel Knight III (Sierra)

JULY
- Blood II (Monolith)

AUGUST
- Evolva (Psygnosis)
- Prey (GT Interactive)

SEPTEMBER
- Champ Manager 3 (Eidos)
- Civilization III (MicroProse)
- Diablo II (Blizzard)

NOVEMBER
- Carmageddon 2 (SCi)
- F1GP3 (MicroProse)
- Messiah (Interplay)
- RPG (Gremlin)
- Total Annihilation II (GT Interactive)
- Ultima IX (EA)

DECEMBER
- Anachronox (Ion Storm)
- Dungeon Keeper 2 (EA)

actua ICE HOCKEY

my dream will come true in nagano

NAGANO 1998

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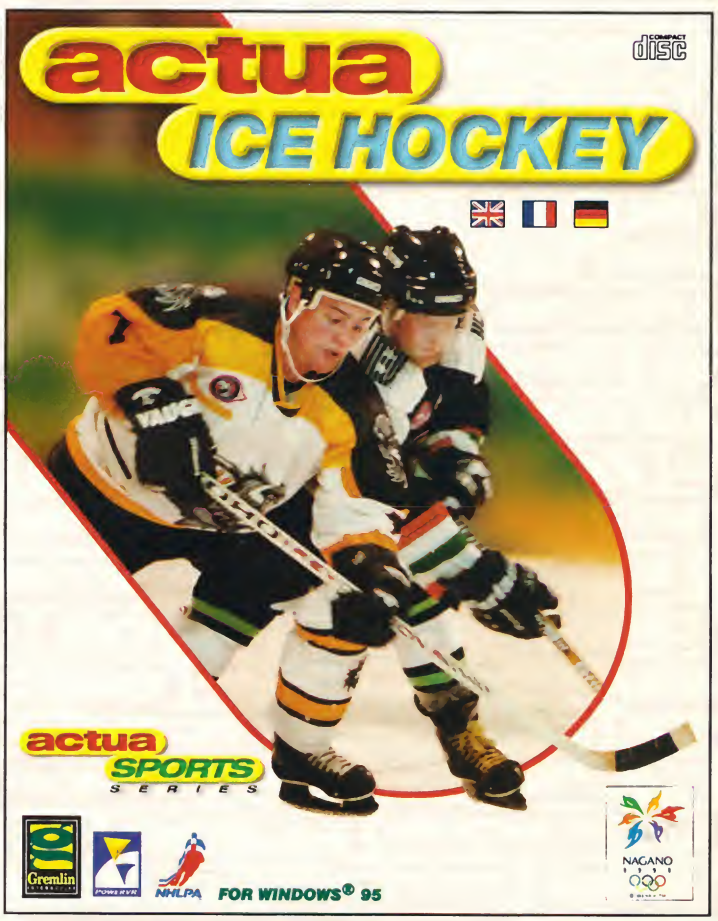
Your dream can come true in the vast Nagano arenas of Aqua Wing and Big Hat with Actua Ice Hockey, an Official Licensed Product of the 1998 Olympic Winter Games.

Play any of the top international sides in your quest for Olympic glory. Every squad contains players from the world's top professional leagues.

Leading professionals provide the awesome player movement and reaction on the ice while stunning live commentary and wild crowd interaction help to bring the unique atmosphere to Sony PlayStation and PC CD-ROM.

Screenshots taken from PC CD-ROM Version



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DATAPAD

Mad French game

French-based developers Rayland are currently working on a new racing/action game, *Mad-Trax*. Although it's still fairly early doors, the game earned favourable attention at the recent Comdex show, where it was on display in the 3Dfx booth, demonstrating the latest Voodoo 2 technology.

Mad-Trax will feature at least three different cars, each fitted with an array of weaponry with which to cause wanton destruction. A publisher has yet to be established, and the six-strong development team are currently working for free. Which is odd.

Best Action game

Best Adventure game

Best Driving game

Best Puzzle game

Best Simulation game

Best Sports game

Best Strategy game

Developer of the year

Publisher of the year

Game of the year

Creative Labs Special Award

PC Zone Special Award

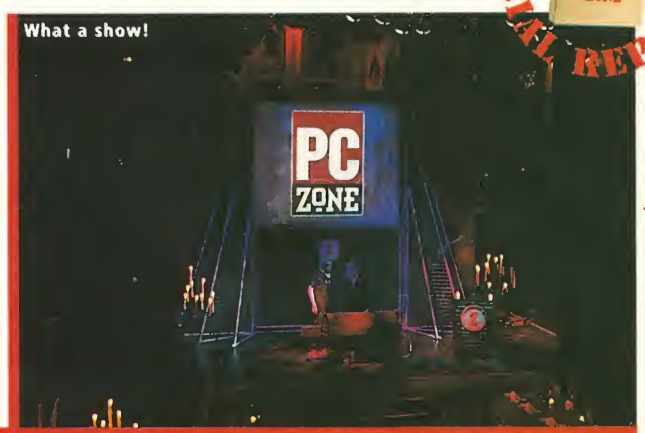
Celebrations at the Zone Awards..

SPECIAL REPORT!

Thursday, 4 December 1997 – a night to remember at the premier *PC Zone* Awards party.

You voted for the best software of 1997, and we presented the awards at a special ceremony held to commemorate this grand occasion. Our specially created solid metal (ie bloody heavy) *PC Zone* 'zed' awards were dished out at a posh champagne dinner at the first ever *PC Zone* Awards party at the Camden Palace in London last December. Everyone there had a rather good time eating, drinking, dancing and fighting the night away in honour of the winners.

Compere Lenny Beige – glitzy, throwback light entertainer – held office, presenting the awards with the help of his surly bouncer and *PC Zone* publisher John Davison. As champagne corks popped and top nosh was scoffed, The Man Who Knows crept in and out of shadows with his camera. Here's what he saw...


What a show!

Zone editorial team (bar a heavily pissed Rich).

Rrrrriiiip!

Stainless' answer to Cheech and Chong?

John, Mike, Thea and Dave have a beer together.

Mallo and Wag, 'avin' a fag.

An elbow in the face from Europress...

Our party was so good, even IDG turned up.

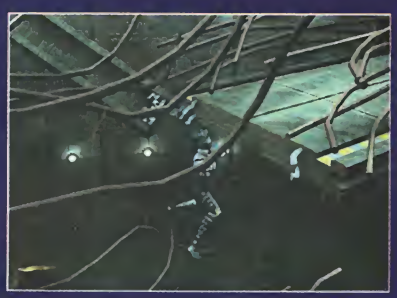
Cathy 'n' Perky chat.

DATAPAD

Bang! You're dead

Sega's excellent *House Of The Dead* arcade shoot 'em up is coming to the PC at some point midway through 1998. Those who have grappled with the twin-gunned cabinet and the disgustingly gruesome splatter film action will know this to be a good thing. *House Of The Dead* caused a significant stir earlier this year by being one of the goriest video games ever created, and in light of all the controversy surrounding the likes of *Carmageddon, GTA, Postal* et al, it's bound to brew up a bit of a stink when it comes out on PC and consoles. Forget the moaning numbskulls, though – *House Of The Dead* is a top-shelf shoot 'em up and should convert well to home machines, especially in light of the escalating 3D card revolution.

The quick and the dead



A dark and broody atmosphere prevails in THQ's forthcoming *Dead Unity*.

Two new games are on the way from THQ. Wanna know more about them? Read on...

The first, *SpeedTribes* is billed as a 'real-time strategic action adventure'. This, however, is a tad misleading as the game seems to centre around zipping about on futuristic bicycles, called 'aercycles', against enemy factions in a bid to decimate them. Players can compete over six deathmatch arenas, or take the challenge to the enemy on their home ground.

THQ's second, *Dead Unity*, is a *Resident Evil*-style adventure game set in a sci-fi alternative reality. Controlling the main character, called Works, players must take on the forces of a massive global computer. This may sound like sci-fi pap, but we're told it should be a bit of a pant pooper – with monsters called 'fleshies' and over 30 other enemy characters to contend with. Some of the game's 400 locations look stunning, particularly the subterranean robot assembly plant and a 250-storey skyscraper. Both games are set for an infuriatingly vague "sometime in 1998" release.

Do you think *Dead Unity*'s designers have been playing a bit of *Incubation*?

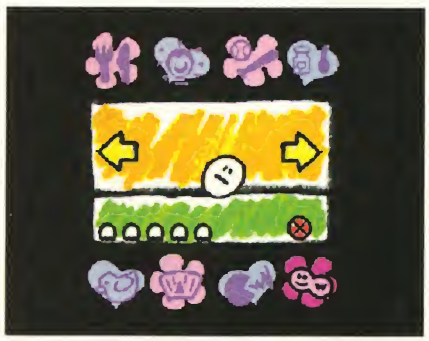
General Patton the head for SSI

Billed rather pretentiously as an 'armour simulation' rather than a regular, everyday 'tank simulation', *Panzer Commander* is a first-person WWII strategy game from SSI that could set new standards in the genre. Rick Martinez, Lead Producer on the project, explains: "We have guys who went to the Patton Museum, while others visited tank collector Jock Littlefield who allowed them access to his personal collection of 50-plus tanks."

After exhaustive photography and programming, the team came up with 24 fully-modelled, drivable vehicles, each with realistic off-road performance, speed, velocity of weapons, engine power, systems, frequency of breakdown and design flaws. *Panzer Commander* could be a tank fanatic's dream and should make the frontline in June.

Breeding to death

Gremlin Interactive are about to encourage the PC owners of Great Britain to indulge in a spot of extremely heavy petting. But there won't be anyone strolling away sniffing their fingers afterwards, because what we're talking about is a home computer version of *Tamagotchi*, the tiresome Japanese 'virtual pet' device so beloved of eight-year-old kids and extremely simple adults. Once in possession of a copy of *Tamagotchi CD-ROM*, the truly friendless among you can witness a charming pixellated blob slowly transforming into a slightly more detailed blob, while ostensibly having some control over its theoretical 'personality' into the bargain. Intriguingly, this PC version of the best-selling egg-sized imbecile's plaything will also contain a "Care Centre" that will "automatically tend to your Tamagotchi's needs for a maximum of 72 hours". If it shakes the damn thing to death, sue.



How on earth did *Tamagotchi* ever catch on?

Segasoft stay vigilant

Segasoft's idea of a millennium party is terrorism on an unprecedented scale.

***Vigilance* is set at the** turn of the century, when crime is rampant. As head of the Special Intelligence Operations Network (SION), players will control eight operatives sent scampering off into the city with the intention of solving 31 terrorism-related cases.

According to Segasoft, their "near-photorealistic" AnyWorld 3D engine is going to make this one of the most atmospheric and exciting games ever seen on the PC. To be fair to Segasoft, the light-sourcing and shadowing in these screenshots does look extremely impressive, although we're still waiting to see how the game itself moves.

Another interesting aspect will be the ability to sell and buy weapons from other people via the Internet on HEAT.NET, Segasoft's Internet Game Network.

Vigilance will be out early next year. For further details, check out **www.vigilance.com**.

Sorry Segasoft, but we wouldn't call this 'near photorealistic' at all.

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DATAPAD

When animals attack

Based on the US TV series (yet to be shown in the UK) and the Transformer-style action figures of the same name, *Beast Wars* from Hasbro is a 3D one-on-one beat 'em up featuring ten of the show's characters. Controlling either the Maximals or the evil Predacon, you battle for control of the universe by way of a good old fist fight. Bouts will take place in a variety of environments, and should feature a lot of transforming action and special movery. *Beast Wars* is due out this winter. Head off to www.hasbro.com for more info.

Keeping up Aperian

THOSE OF YOU WHO, HAVING FINISHED ALL 412 OTHER REAL-TIME STRATEGY games, are starved of clicky-thinky action, will be getting all hot and moist at the prospect of the appearance later this year of *Aperian 7*.

Swedish developers Novastorm are behind the project, details of which are somewhat sketchy. We know it's set in 2419, and we know that, *Dune II*-style, there are three competing corporations out to rule what's left of civilisation and colonise the planet they call Aperian 7. We also know it has a decent 3D engine and Internet play. Thanks to the excellent press release, we also know that to complete a battle successfully you will have to "strategically place and move your units on the battlefield". Unusual, perhaps, in a real-time action/strategy game, but that's the Swedes for you. But we don't know when it's out, so just don't ask. Alright?

Strange name, good-looking game. *Aperian 7* should be with us some time in 98.

When there's no more room in hell...

(Above left) A zombie yesterday. (Right) George A Romero – the man who launched a thousand zombie films – makes games ad for Capcom.

AS FIRST MENTIONED LAST ISSUE, GAMES-PLAYING GOREHOUNDS may be interested to know that 'zombie god' movie director George A Romero – he of *Night Of The Living Dead*, *Dawn Of The Dead* and *Day Of The Dead* fame – has directed a TV/film advertisement for Capcom's forthcoming *Resident Evil 2*.

The 30-second commercial features familiar Romero imagery (unfortunately, there's no screwdriver-in-the-ear scene...) and was shot entirely on location in Japan. Unfortunately for UK gamesplayers, it may never see the light of day over here (for Japs' eyes only), which is rather strange considering how big Romero and his films are in the West. You may want to keep an eye on Capcom's website at www.capcom.com for possible digital sneak peeks.

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Doom movie doomed?

Here we go again. TriStar Pictures have announced that *Doom* will be the next game to make it to the big screen. Following gamely in the footsteps of game-to-movie embarrassments such as *Super Mario Brothers* and *Street Fighter*, we can only pray for a better outcome. The company have already assigned scriptwriters to the project and are now looking for a director who has something other than washing powder commercials to his credit, plus a cast who can act. Will Peewee Herman's busy schedule allow him a starring role in *Doom*? Will Arnie ever get a look in? Should John Woo direct? The options are simply mind-boggling...

How deep is your sub?

Two new games from US development outfit Singletrac are set to be released by GT in the new year.

SINGLETRAC'S *CRITICAL DEPTH*, due for release soon, is dubbed as "underwater action/strategy with a twist". Essentially, it's an adventure in which you pilot a submarine around the ocean looking for mysterious 'pods'. We're told that it also doubles as a hell of a multi-player game, too. Up to 12 players can fight it out for possession of the pods in order to gain special powers that enable them to kill each other in various drippingly sadistic ways. Luckily, the single-player game will also feature 12 teams, which could work out pretty well if you've got no mates or live a sad lonely existence on your own. Could be the underwater equivalent of *GTA*, we think...

An explosive screenshot from Singletrac's sci-fi marine sim *Outwars*.

Singletrac are also putting the finishing touches to *Outwars*, a planet-roaming action/adventure with massive robotic marines and some "truly startling" 3D graphics. Changing weather conditions, a chilling cinematic soundtrack, fully controllable wingmen and truly horrific alien weapons are some of the high points to look out for. More on these two in the near future.

Tora! Tora! Tora!

ONE OF THE DOWNSIDES OF *AIR Warrior II* was its lack of graphical detail. Developers Kesmai have decided to remedy this by releasing the all-new, suped-up *Air Warrior III* – replete with new 3D accelerated graphics. There will also be four new planes to fly. All of these will be WWII Japanese fighters, so if you choose to work on an US aircraft carrier in the on-line scenario, watch out. Kesmai are also planning more involved on-line missions, giving players individual objectives to complete, plus a new system of performance-related scoring. Up to 120 people can take part in one scenario. Expect burning debris from Interactive Magic in the new year.

Air Warrior III's graphics are far better than before.

LET THEM EAT WAKE!"

EXPERIENCE JUST ADD WATER

VR SPORTS POWERBOAT Racing

DATAPAD

Puzzled aliens

Sunsoft have turned their backs on the current splatter/drive/shoot 'em up trend and have released *Syyrah – The Warp Hunter*, a good old-fashioned inoffensive puzzler that's best described as *Asteroids* meets *Tetris*. Controlling a spaceship in the centre of the screen, you rotate left and right, firing coloured shapes into more coloured shapes that slowly advance towards you. When three or more identically coloured 'beans' are clustered together they explode. Yeah – it's 150 levels of sheer simplicity. And yes, it has an epic, overcomplicated plot involving alien invasions, but a well 'ard heroine lead character goes some way to make up for it. *Syyrah* should be in the shops now, priced at £19.99.

THE MAN WHO KNOWS

Stop this PC filth! Moral turpitude abounds on an international scale...

Once again, the thorny issue of censorship has reared its grotesquely ugly head, with games being banned in a number of territories. The government of Australia deemed mass murder 'em up *Postal* a little strong for the sensitive denizens of their reserved nation, banning the game outright. Developers Running With Scissors refused to water the game down on principle, and top cheese Vince Desi was clearly unimpressed at the government's decision, launching this scathing attack: "Who the hell do these people think they are? We made a game that we'd like to play ourselves, a game where you don't shoot at aliens or look for some dragon's balls, and if the government of Australia doesn't want to let their people make their own decisions, fine."

Running *Postal* close in the censorship stakes is ***Carmageddon***, which has recently been banished from Brazil; a surprisingly moralistic move from a country that would appear to have few qualms about harbouring convicted criminals. It has been claimed that the Brazilian National Traffic Department, Denatran, received numerous complaints that the game had incited individuals to commit acts of violence while driving. Denatran director José Roberta de Souza Dias (try saying that after eight pints of continental lager) said that *Carmageddon* violated Brazilian traffic policy, which appears to be a fairly literal interpretation of what, after all, is only a game.

Nevertheless, the wheels of justice were set in motion and the Brazilian government gave retailers 72 hours to remove the product from their shelves. Until the ban, the game had been restricted to those over the age of 21 and had provoked little interest, managing only modest sales. Naturally, in a Frankie Goes To Hollywood-style scenario, the media coverage ensuing from the ban created unprecedented demand. In a further macabre twist, *Carmageddon*'s Brazilian distributors Brasoft (gnff) have teamed up with Denatran to produce an educational CD-ROM about driving safety.

The madness continues with the news that iD may be forced to make creative changes to ***Quake II*** in order to allow the game to go on sale in Germany. iD said they didn't like it, but they've got to go along with it, as publishers Activision have stated that they may be willing to make compromises in order to get the game past the censors. Germany's Independent Self-Rating Organisation has already said that, as it stands, *Quake II* is too violent, even for adults. The German authorities are notoriously touchy, and generally refuse any game that portrays violence against humans. In the past, a solution has been to replace human characters with robots or zombies, and it is likely that the old green blood trick will be brought into play again. Which is a nonsense.

Meanwhile, back in the civilised bastion of free thinking that is Great Britain, some self-appointed moral crusaders have been calling for yet more game censorship. A petition was handed into Parliament by the Movement for Christian Democracy, co-founded by Lord Alton of Liverpool, whose last bout of self-publicity came with an ill-advised anti-abortion campaign some years ago. Speaking on behalf of the aforementioned Godbothering do-gooders, Jonathan Bartley said: "We're in the early stages of development of video games and we will have to see the affects fully assessed. But every indication is that violence needs to be controlled, and we need to have restrictions and guidelines for parents and those using the games."

Following the controversy surrounding BMG Interactive's ***Grand Theft Auto***, proposals are being considered by the Home Office whereby all racing games would carry an on-screen safety warning. Simon Butler of BMG believes this is pointless though, saying: "By the time someone has bought a game they've made the decision that they want to play it and enjoy it."

The idea of a warning came from a member of the public who wrote a letter claiming that video games encourage dangerous driving. The letter was subsequently passed on to the home secretary, Jack Straw, although for obvious reasons it may not be his top priority.

Imagine that!

US development house in real-time strategy game shock horror.

Imagine Studios' ***Ares Rising*** **has** 'potential hit' written all over it, especially when you consider that the talent behind it includes the lead designer, programmer and writer of the original *Privateer*. Their new project, due out in early '98, is a space strategy/simulation along the lines of the aforementioned *Privateer*, but with influences from *Ascendancy* slung in for good measure. One thing is for sure: you'll need some mastery of intergalactic diplomacy and economics to be able to suss the whole thing out.

Extensive network play options will mean up to eight players can battle it out in a selection of team or lone-play scenarios, and the graphics are being put together using Charybdis' MythOS engine (as seen in I-Magic's dodgy tank sims), so it might be a bit of alright.

Likely to come out through Interactive Magic in the UK: Imagine Studios' weighty new space sim ***Ares Rising.***

You read it here first

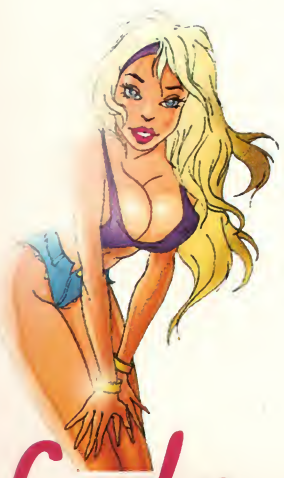
The hottest last-minute news as we crumble into a heap of post-Christmas exhaustion... *PC Zone* can reveal a few new bits and bobs about Sean Cooper's forthcoming *Dungeon Keeper 2* from Bullfrog. Apparently, the Internet multi-player side of things will play a huge part this time around, as Bullfrog's programmers have come up with a system that is capable of 'absorbing lag' – allowing fast over-the-wire play, even for players experiencing 'pings' of over 500 milliseconds. Maps will be larger to allow for more players, the graphics engine will focus around 3D hardware acceleration, curved surfaces will allow for a greater variety of architecture, and the game will feature fully-modelled polygon creatures rather than sprite-based monsters (as seen in the first game).

It has been confirmed that *Discworld III* is in development at Perfect Entertainment's HQ, although no details or screenshots have been made public. Rest assured that as soon as they are, we'll have them in this very magazine.

Acclaim are working on a follow-up to their successful action-adventure dinosaur blaster, *Turok: Dinosaur Hunter*, tentatively entitled *Turok 2* (groan). They were also to release *NHL Breakaway '98* (an ice hockey game, not a biscuit simulator) at some point early in the year, but have now canned the project to concentrate on an N64 basketball game (boo!).

Finally, 3DO (yes, they're still going strong) have announced that they are lining up *Uprising II*, *Third Domain*, *Might And Magic On-line*, *Meridian 59 Renaissance*, *Heroes Of Might And Magic III* and *Might And Magic VII* (a confusing mix of titles we know, but...) for a '98 release. We'll have more on all of these next issue.

SOMETIMES, JUST BEING HARD AND FIRM IS GOOD ENOUGH FOR BUSINESS



Lula

THE SEXY EMPIRE

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HOT Shots

Happy new year, screenshot hunter. Let it be known that thee stumble upon a place known as 'screenshot heaven'. And let thee rejoice. Lay bare thy soul in the presence of *Blade*. Drink 'soup of the Gods' on thy knees to *Special Ops*. And fill thy trolleys with 'eggs of the earth' in audience with *Commandos*.

Commandos: Behind Enemy Lines (Pyro Studios/Eidos Interactive)

As previously reported, this is an action strategy affair set during the World War II. Simulating the assault operations of a group of Allied commandos, the idea is to kill members of the German army – which begs the question of how the game will be received in, say, Germany, for instance.

Still, it looks smart and features accurate 3D models of more than 200 wartime buildings, vehicles and weapons. The killing will take place in four geographically disparate areas, namely the Norwegian fjords, North Africa, Normandy and the Rhine Crossing. May 1998 will see gamers finally take revenge on the 'Jeermans' for bombing Stan Boardman's chippy.

Special Ops (Zombie/BMG)

To get the feel of actual combat, *Special Ops* developers Zombie attended army 'live fire' sorties to see what really goes on. From this they saw how Marines knit together in teams, and how they work together to blow people's heads off on the battlefield. This game will be character heavy, the developers claim, with realistic AI and photo-realistic texture-mapping. Most of *Special Ops* will be based outdoors, and Zombie have created their own 3D engine specifically designed to handle this. Potential conscripts should expect reprisal attacks, seize-and-destroy missions, hostage rescue missions, counter-terrorist attacks, and raid-and-destroy missions. *Special Ops* is due out early in the new year. Be ready.

Blade (Rebel Act/Gremlin)

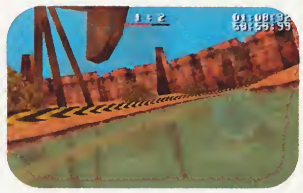
It keeps getting better, man

Early previews of Rebel Act's forthcoming *Blade* have raised an eyebrow or two in the *PC Zone* office of late, and – having seen even more of the game recently – our foreheads just don't know what to do. The awesome real-time lighting just gets better every time we see it, and Rebel Act's recently unveiled new water technology really does have to be seen to be believed – it knocks every other water effect seen anywhere else into a rather deep cocked hat. It has realistic reflections, is translucent, coloured *and* reacts properly when disturbed. All this, and we're still only talking about the software version. Of course, 3D acceleration will add even more graphical splendour to *Blade*, although we have been told not to expect an enhanced version until early in spring.

Double-edged sword

Not only will *Blade* sport some of the most impressive graphical effects ever, it will also have a story and a game behind it. Anyone familiar with the works of classic fantasy novelists Jack Vance and Fritz Weiber will know what to expect. A gritty, realistic swords and sorcery world, populated by knights, orcs, goblins, ogres and dragons (one dragon, made of 2500 polygons and its own set of moving eyeballs), is currently on the cards, coupled with a fully interactive 'talkie' story system, all wrapped around a story about the search for seven magical keys and the good old-fashioned battle between good and evil. Complex AI ensures that the in-game interaction remains fluid and believable, and over 60 different weapons are promised to aid death and destruction on an unprecedented scale. *Blade* will almost certainly be *the* game to look out for in October this year.

HOT Shots



Powerboat (Eastpoint/Interplay)

Looking good and expected in for review next issue is Interplay's *Powerboat Racing*. Dubbed as a game "so real you'll wet yourself", this, ahem, powerboat racing game has a number of "unique selling points" that should help it rise above most of the other aquatic Live And Let Die wannabes out there. For starters, the 3D environment is fully interactive. What this means is that, as you play, you'll find the track changing as you tear round it, and if you're particularly skilful you may even find a few secret bits hidden underneath the waves. Moving obstacles also interfere with the race (check out the falling car in the screenshots), so watch out for Sheriff J W Pepper en route to the finish line...

Riot: Mobile Armour (Monolith/Microsoft)

Due for an early 1998 release through Microsoft, Monolith's first-person action game *Riot: Mobile Armour* will be the first in a range of games to use DirectEngine – a fast, flexible, true 3D engine with built-in client/server-based networking. To all intents and purposes Microsoft's equivalent of iD's *Quake* engine.

Like many of its rivals, *Riot* will feature coloured lighting, realistic physics, motion-captured animation and loads of enemies. Unlike many of its rivals, though, it will all be presented in an Animé *(Japanese animation – Ed)* style, with big robots, demons with multi-headed penises, and naked, blue-haired girls baring all when you least expect it. Probably.

Riot will be bundled with DirectEdit – a fully-featured world editor that Monolith say will make level design easy. There will also be the facility to create custom scripting for enemies, objects and servers. And that we like.

IS THIS THE REAL LIFE...

OR IS THIS JUST FANTASY ?

Queen The Eye is a new action adventure game combining original characters and a gripping storyline. Harmonising the music with cutting edge, in-depth gameplay, this is an experience that really will rock you. Hear the music. Play the game.

PC ZONE our price

CHART Predictions

Welcome to *PC Zone*'s version of *The Chart Show*, sponsored by Our Price. Each month it'll feature the titles we think will be flying off the shelves in the coming weeks, and it will also play host to exclusive news and competitions.

JUST WHEN YOU THOUGHT IT WAS SAFE TO VENTURE INTO THE HIGH STREET AGAIN, the January sales are upon us, with tempting offers and promotions. Rather than dreading the prospect however, games lovers should be jumping for joy at the super low prices. Our Price are selling a variety of cool titles including *Network Q Rally*, *Roland Ciarros Tennis* and *SWIV 3D* from just £4.99. Who would have thought you could buy a CD-ROM game for under a fiver! All titles are subject to availability, so dash out now to your nearest store to avoid disappointment and give your games collection a post-Christmas boost.

To take part in this month's Our Price Top 10 prize giveaway, just put pen to paper, answer the question below and send it in to: PC Zone, Our Price Competition (60), Dennis Publishing Ltd, 19 Bolsover St, London W1P 7HJ.

Our Price Question:

NETWORK Q RALLY IS THE PREDECESSOR TO WHICH GAME?

Rules and restrictions: All entries must be received by Friday 13 February 1998. No correspondence will be entered into. The Editor's decision is final and the winners will be notified by post. All other usual restrictions apply.

DISCLAIMER: The Top 10 printed is correct at the time of going to press but positions, titles and prices may vary throughout the month.

1. **QUAKE II** (Activision) £29.99

2. **TOMB RAIDER II** (Eidos Interactive) £29.99

3. **CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 2 97/98** (Eidos Interactive) £19.99

4. **GRAND THEFT AUTO** (BMG) £34.99

5. **DEPTHS OF DOOM** (One Stop) £16.99

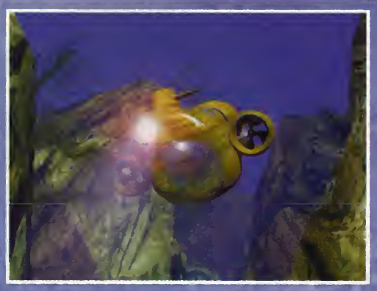
6. **SCREAMER RALLY** (Virgin) £19.99

7. **FIFA 98: RTWC** (EA Sports) £29.99

8. **BLADE RUNNER** (Virgin Interactive) £34.99

9. **MONKEY ISLAND 3** (LucasArts/Virgin) £34.99

10. **WORMS 2** (Ocean) £29.99



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Oi! ...Shearer

Notoriously surly and uncommunicative, Steve Hill was the obvious choice to talk to Alan Shearer about *Actua Soccer 2*, the World Cup and, er, chicken 'n' beans.

ON THE MORNING OF ENGLAND'S FRIENDLY against Cameroon, a meeting has been arranged in the £750-a-night Landmark Hotel (Peter Ustinov's philosophical steakhouse being closed). On arrival, your bleary-eyed correspondent is in severe need of a caffeine injection, at which point England's finest striker leaps out of his chair and starts rummaging through cupboards for a spare coffee cup. Crockery secured, and a quick half of *Actua Soccer 2* later, the chat commences.

PC Zone: Alan, what was your actual contribution to *Actua Soccer*?

Alan Shearer: I think the majority of it's got to be down to the people that designed it and what have you, but when I was injured they kept me informed of the things that were going on. They came up with the ideas and basically bounced them off me. But it was very difficult for me to turn round and say 'No, that won't work,' because at the end of the day they're the experts.

PCZ: Have you played the game much yourself?

AS: I wouldn't say a great deal – I've been busy training twice a day over the last month. When I get home the kids [girls, aged two and five] don't want to play football games; they're not interested in them at the moment. I've just bought *Croc* and *Caspar The Friendly Ghost* for them for Christmas. I guess that means I'll have to learn how to play them before then – that'll be something for me to do when they go to bed at night.

PCZ: This is the first computer game you've done. How come you went for Gremlin?

Shearer believes that Gremlin have replicated his likeness accurately. In this case, after a pot of mushroom tea...

AS: Gremlin approached me. They told me their idea and I liked it. I get on very well with them and we've got a good relationship – it's getting stronger and hopefully it'll continue.

PCZ: It's not exactly new – Gremlin did *Gary Lineker's Soccer* about ten years ago. But it was awful.

AS: Is this one better then?

PCZ: Things have moved on a little bit, yeah. Did you know Ginola's doing the *FIFA* game?

AS: I didn't know, no.

PCZ: That's the big rival. Is there any personal rivalry there?

AS: No – but I'm sure there will be when we play Tottenham.

PCZ: Alan, do you remember David James [Liverpool goalkeeper] admitting playing computer games cost him his concentration? Do any other players play games that you know of?

AS: There's a few at our place [Newcastle United]. They take them away on a Friday but they certainly don't sit up all hours playing them.

PCZ: Anyone in particular?

AS: Rob Lee, David Batty, Steve Watson...

PCZ: So they'll have a PlayStation in the hotel?

AS: Generally someone'll bring one along and a few of them will go into their room and have a go at it.

PCZ: Do you think it'll ever replace a round of golf or betting through the card at Hackney and Crayford?

AS: *(Laughs)* I don't know. I mean, it takes so long to play them now. It might be quicker than a round of golf.

PCZ: What's it like seeing yourself in a game? Is it strange?

AS: It is strange, yeah – it's like when you see yourself on television. You do get used to it, but at first it's strange. ▶

***"Seeing yourself in a computer game is strange – it's like when you see yourself on television."* Alan Shearer**

What's Your Game?

Pic credit: Allsport UK Ltd/Shaun Botterill

(Above) Shearer as Brazil takes on Hill as England (with Shearer playing up front). The result? A dour goalless draw. (Right) Alan in more comfortable surroundings. Howay, etc.

PCZ: Do you think it's a decent likeness?
AS: I think it's very good. I think everything about the game – the graphics, the commentary, the grounds – is very good. It's worked out well.
PCZ: I've been playing *Actua Soccer 2* a bit and Shearer seems to be the best player by far.
AS: *(Laughs)* Not at the moment he's not.
PCZ: Do you think they've got it just right? You didn't stipulate that you've got to be quicker?
AS: No, I didn't. No. No.
PCZ: Will you be doing some more stuff for Gremlin after this?
AS: I think it's been talked about, but only briefly. But I'm hoping, yeah.
PCZ: For the Italy-England game, I was actually the first person on the pitch to congratulate Ian Wright, when really it should have been you. Whereabouts did you watch the game?
AS: I was on holiday in Barbados. I was actually in the airport when the game was being played, having a running commentary on the phone from my Dad. But I came back Sunday morning and watched it on video straight away.
PCZ: What were your thoughts when the game was going on?
AS: It's very difficult. I mean, I'm sat thousands of miles away in another country. It's strange when you're not playing. Obviously I'd like to have been there, but circumstances dictated that I couldn't. They've done extremely well in getting there but it wasn't just that one game, it was the games before that as well.
PCZ: How is the ankle, anyway?
AS: Fine. I've started jogging again. It's going well and hopefully that'll continue. But I won't rush it.
PCZ: Did it ever cross your mind that this could be a career-ending injury?
AS: No. The technology that's around today meant it never crossed my mind. I'm strong as a person, I've got good people around me who help me and I work hard. I've also got very, very good physios at Newcastle, so I'm in good hands.
PCZ: What kind of timescale are you looking at for getting back?
AS: If I make it back in March, I'll be happy. But anything before that will be a big, big bonus. It's impossible for me to put a date on it because if I do and I don't make it, there'll only be speculation that something's gone wrong. So I'll just say that I'll be back when I'm better; my body'll tell me when the time's right.
PCZ: So you've got your sights set on the World Cup?
AS: Yeah, that's the big thing to go for now – for me and for everyone else.
PCZ: Do you think this is your big chance to prove yourself on a world stage against the likes of Romario?
AS: I don't think I've got anything to prove. I'll go over there and do my best; if that means me coming out top goalscorer or England winning the World Cup then great. But at the end of the day I can't do anything more than give my best.
PCZ: Did the Tournoi help? Did that provide a taster?
AS: Yes, I think it did, it was tremendous. It got a lot of stick before we went, but after we came out winning, the confidence it gave everyone – especially after beating the Italians – was a good thing. I think that was the important factor – it gave the nation and the side a big lift and a tremendous amount of confidence, which is a big thing in football.
PCZ: I think it was a crucial result, because even before the game in Rome the Italian press were saying they weren't that confident.
AS: Well, it was a big result. I mean, the Italians were saying that it didn't have any bearing on that game. In a way it did, in a way it didn't. It was a completely different game but I think mentally they realised that England were getting back, and getting back to the England that should be up there.
PCZ: We're definitely taken seriously now, aren't we?
AS: Yeah, without a doubt. I think we were always taken seriously. Circumstances weren't with us at the time. Standards and everything else around the game of football have improved, which is helping everyone in England.
PCZ: Have you modelled yourself on Dalglish at all in dealing with the press?
AS: No. What are you trying to say? *(Guffaws all round)* Spit it out. *(More laughter)*
PCZ: Have you ever had a bet on the time of the first throw-in?
AS: *(Smiles)* No, certainly not.
PCZ: Do you know anyone who has?
AS: Er, no.
PCZ: If you did, would you tell me?
AS: No. *(More guffaws)*
PCZ: Come on, tell us – do you still swear by chicken 'n' beans?
AS: No, I don't, no. To be honest, I only had that on the day of that particular game. I've been labelled with it ever since.
PCZ: How did that come about?
AS: I got out of the car and there was a TV crew who asked me what I'd had for a pre-match meal. It was fortunate that I scored a couple of goals that day – they were waiting by my car when I went back to it after the game, and the 'chicken 'n' beans before every game' tag's stuck ever since. I've only had that a couple of times. I tend to vary it.
PCZ: And on that bombshell...

(Far left) Alan Shearer's dream team, in which he has modestly included himself.
(Left) Gremlin's *Actua Soccer 2*, available in all good computer stores.

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First Encounter

Starship Troopers

EVER SINCE SARAH Brightman cavorted her way through three minutes of pop history in her bacofoil leotard, Richie Shoemaker has wanted to be a starship trooper, just so someone would lose their heart to him. Aaaaah.

STARSHIP TROOPERS (THE MOVIE) IS 30 per cent poo in much the same way that *Independence Day* was 97 per cent poo. The difference is, 70 per cent of *Starship Troopers* is su-bloody-perb. Hopefully it'll drop the cack quotient by doing away with the *Beverly Hills 90210* flannel and concentrating on action. Do we want to know more or what?

"It's an action/strategy game played from a third-person perspective," says Mike Bilodeau, the game's producer. "However, the emphasis is on action. One of the coolest things that our game has over any other is that we will have hundreds, nay thousands of enemies on the screen at once, just like in the movie. Another great feature is our squad-based missions. Players can send out AI-controlled units to take out specific objectives, like bug holes. The player will be able to travel above and below ground without any load time, and each game 'world' will be over an area of 25 square miles."

Sounds like a bit of a blockbuster to me, and not just another *Quake*-clone.

Mike goes on: "We'll have a multi-player option in the game but as well as that there'll be some resource management and a fleet control element. Once you go up in rank you'll have more control of your squad and/or the fleet. You can decide to send an 'avatar' to investigate a new weapon, or check on relations with other races."

Hang on. I don't remember seeing 'other races' in the film. Just how close to the true spirit of the movie are we sailing here, Mike?

"It's a mixture of both the book and the movie. We have bugs identical to the ones seen in the movie but the storyline is set some time after the movie happens. We did use the armour from the book and some of the weapons, bug holes and jumpjets."

Sounds more like a sequel to me. So will we see new weapons and new aliens?

"Yep. The bugs have new allies and so do the humans. And if you want new weapons, we've got 'em – ranging from tactical nukes to a knife beam, the latest in hi-tech warfare."

That's all very nice, but the question on everyone's lips is: do we get to blow Doogie Howser's head off?

"No..." Boo! "But you will see a lot of bug guts and a helluva lot of explosions. You'll see friendlies get shot up, yelling and screaming, dismembering, intestines..."

Er, thanks, Mike. You can take him back to his cell now, nurse.

Wahey! *Starship Troopers* promises loads of horrible bugs for you to exterminate.

The bugs are identical to the ones seen in the movie.

Each world provides 25 square miles of terrain and neato space armour to run around in.

Product details

Developer: MicroProse
Publisher: MicroProse
Release Date: Summer 98
Website: www.microprose.com

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Ultimate Soccer Manager 98

TEVE HILL CLAIMS TO know a thing or two about football, as do Impressions, who are on the verge of releasing their third management game in as many years.

MAY 1995 SAW THE ADVENT OF THE *Ultimate Soccer Manager* series, and as management games go, it was largely a case of business as usual, with the intricacies of The Beautiful Game represented via a series of coloured blobs on a vague representation of a football pitch. However, it did boast a fairly detailed business model, with budding managers afforded every opportunity to transform their rundown cowsheds into futuristic super stadia.

To cater for the '90s-style football supporter restaurants, bars, club shops and so forth could be constructed, with the player deciding such crucial factors as the price of a pint and the consistency of the Bovril (the latter being a hilarious untruth, unfortunately). But *USM* did have a USP (faceless marketingspeak for Unique Selling Point) in that 'bungs' could be offered to rival managers, thus accurately replicating the sleaze factor sullying the sport at the time, with suitcases of used banknotes regularly turning up on motorway service station forecourts.

Ultimate Soccer Manager 2 successfully continued the evolution of the series, and while it never quite enjoyed the high profile of Eidos' ubiquitous *Championship Manager 2*, it was nevertheless highly fancied by those people in the know.

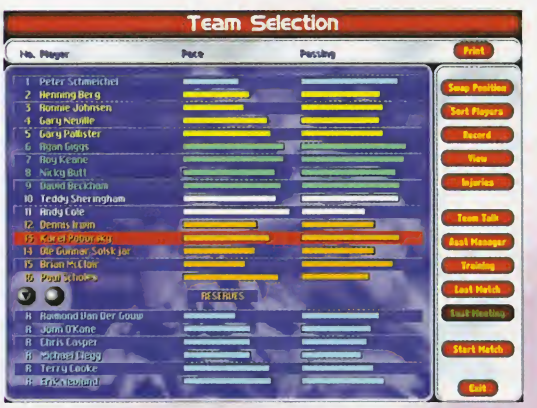
Which brings us succinctly to *Ultimate Soccer Manager 98*, and those with eyes will be able to see that graphically it has certainly come along in leaps, and indeed bounds, with the cunning inclusion of some fairly realistic players. The game will feature leagues from England, Scotland, Italy, France, Spain and Germany, all of which run simultaneously in the computer's head. Matches will be represented via animated action and full commentary, which Impressions claim will name every single player, accurate data for whom has been garnered with the co-operation of some 120 footie fanzines. The stadium and the crowd will even change to reflect the current situation of the club, so don't expect too many in for a midweek end-of-season game at Mansfield.

The newly-developed coaching mode promises to be comprehensive, with training options enabling certain players to concentrate on specific skills, such as passing and shooting, as well as taking corners, throw-ins and penalties. The business aspect will still feature heavily, with the addition of club flotations, sponsorship and merchandising to widen would-be managers' wheeling and dealing options.

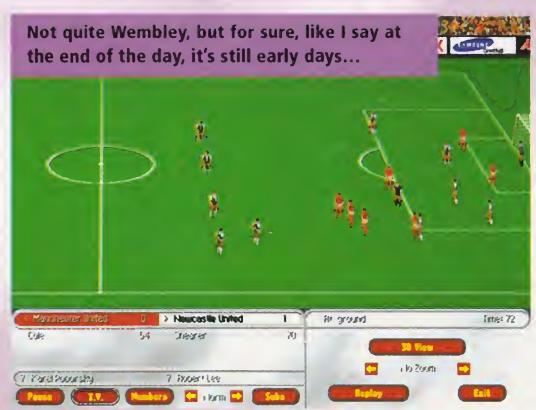
Management games often live or die on their transfer systems, and *Ultimate Soccer Manager 98* will feature in-depth negotiation with rival managers, and a pool of some 10,000 players to choose from. Again, bribery and bungs will be an option, so if you can't get that hot new striker you want and all else fails, fill an envelope with some wedge and head for Watford Gap...

Welcome to the Deva Stadium for the tie between Chester City and Real Madrid.

Someone scores – allegedly...



Not quite Wembley, but for sure, like I say at the end of the day, it's still early days...



Product details

Developer: Impressions
Publisher: Sierra
Release Date: February 98
Website: www.sierra.com

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Descent: FreeSpace – The Great War

LONG BEFORE *DUKE* battled with *Quake* for 3D supremacy, *Descent* jostled with *Doom*. Now it's back, this time to beat seven shades out of the likes of *Wing Commander: Prophecy*. Richie Shoemaker takes a ringside seat.

ONE MUST ADAPT TO SURVIVE – THAT'S the basic premise of evolution. Just as our simian forebears had to develop thumbs so they could peel bananas, *Descent* had to leave the confines of its subterranean gameplay to forge a future for itself against games like *X-Wing Vs TIE Fighter*. *Descent II* was a good game for sure, but apart from a couple of extras, it was the same old mixture of getting lost in winding tunnels, finding reactors and getting the feck out.

The developers of *Descent: FreeSpace* have peeked out from their little asteroid and seen games like *Wing Commander* taking all the glory. They've left *Descent*-cloning to games like Acclaim's *Forsaken* and have set off into the great (almost) unknown.

So apart from the freedom of charging about the near-infinite voids of space, what else does *FreeSpace* offer over and above the distinguished competition? For a start, the rigid mission structures inherent not only in the prequels but also in the recent *Wing Commander: Prophecy* have been given the boot. In their place *FreeSpace* boasts what developers Volition call "multiple goal structures" where objectives and outcomes can change depending on a player's action – or indeed inaction. For example, if a player attacks a larger ship and fails to intercept, say, one of the escape pods, the lucky escapee may turn up later to put a spanner in the works.

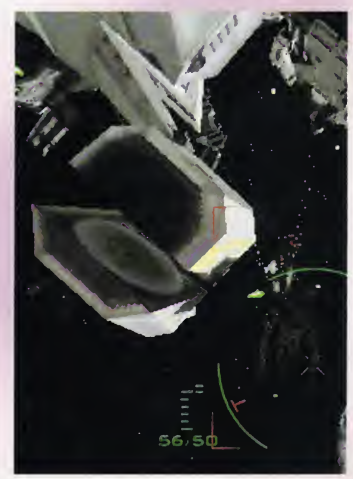
Another new development is the ability to move from interplanetary flight to atmospheric flight. As fighters enter a planet's atmosphere, the environment will gradually change and players will have to adapt their skills to deal with the new medium.

Like *Descent II* players won't be alone – co-operative autonomous entities (wingmen to you and me), will help out if you ask them nicely, although to begin with you'll probably be the one taking the orders. Just like the original games, multi-player options will, of course, feature strongly. Team formations and voice messaging are planned to be incorporated as well as perhaps some video conferencing capabilities – although the thought of watching spotty youths grinning at you down the wire seems rather unsavoury.

Research and new technology will play a part in the game, with a huge and increasing arsenal to bring to bear against the enemy, plus new kit appearing regularly as the game progresses, depending on how you play the missions.

So far it doesn't sound much like the old *Descent* we all knew, loved and got bored with after mission 12. But looking at the graphics in action, there's an obvious and very welcome similarity in style. Whether *FreeSpace* will retain the originality of the first release alongside its new found freedom remains to be seen. We'll keep our fingers crossed. The polygon count is high and so are our expectations.

Descent has taken a brave step out from its underground lair and promises "no walls and no limits". We shall see...



In space, no one can hear you beam.

Product details

Developer: Volition
Publisher: Interplay
Release Date: Spring 1998
Website: www.interplay.com

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Outcast

TOP OF THE POPS SPANGLY graphics. A character called Slade. Some bizarre return to the early '70s? No, it's Infogrames' swish new title, says a flares-free Charlie Brooker.

OUTCAST IS A PRETTY RISKY TITLE, especially when you consider the perceived social standing of the average computer games fanatic. Yet despite its potentially upsetting moniker, Infogrames, one of the premier French software houses (alongside Delphine and um... er...), seem confident that *Outcast* will be warmly welcomed by PC gamers worldwide.

See those screenshots – the ones that look like a cross between a Roger Dean album cover and a live action production of *2000AD*'s Rogue Trooper strip? Those are in-game grabs. No, really. Obviously, the designers have made full use of the spangly *Top Of The Pops*-style lighting effects (not to mention the polygon manhandling capabilities) of that increasingly ubiquitous piece of gaming kit – the 3D accelerator card. It's not all polygons, polygons, polygons, mind – *Outcast* also makes use of that other friend of the 3D games programmer, the 'voxel' *(A voxel is a three-dimensional pixel – Education Ed).*

The game itself is a cross between *Tomb Raider* and *Alone In The Dark*, which isn't surprising when you consider that the entire *AITD* series sprang from Infogrames' sweaty Gallic loins in the first place. Star of the show is a butch military dude with an unassuming name: Cutter Slade. Not Malcolm Jones, or David Smith, or Bob Tosscock. No: *Cutter Slade.* Anyway, Cutter is described as a "ruthless lone soldier", with brains as big as his biceps, and a love of classical music, especially when it's played by the Moscow Philharmonic (which is handy, because they've provided the soundtrack to the game).

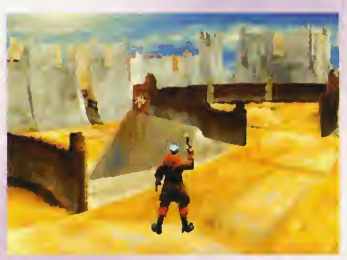
According to the PR bumph, Slade's been suffering anxiety attacks since his girlfriend disappeared in 1988. Let's face it, they wouldn't bother mentioning that unless she was due to show her face in the game proper, so expect to see a bit of love interest bunged in for good measure.

Aside from having drop-dead-gorgeous visuals, *Outcast* also promises some eerily realistic enemy AI, courtesy of a coding concept Infogrames call "behavioural legibility". We've got a description of what that actually means right here in front of us, but to be honest, we can't make head nor tail of it. Still, it's probably ground-breaking, yeah? Either that or a load of old nonsense; you'll have to wait for the review to find out.

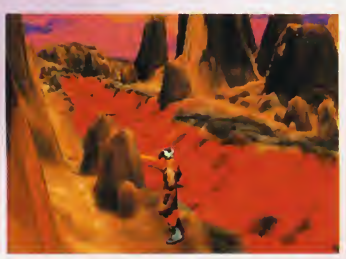
The game also contains plenty of achingly pleasant animation, and a novel control method available to owners of the 'twisty' Microsoft SideWinder joystick, whereby rotations of the stick barrel cause our hero to swivel his arms around in a macho manner. It all looks and sounds absolutely swell: we'll be looking at this promising title in greater depth as soon as is humanly possible. Because we love you all so much, we can barely sit still. Now pucker up and let us kiss you silly.

(Inset) Fashion crusader or poncey-trousered twatbag? It's a close call, that's for sure.

Slade in contemplative mood, whistling the *Screen Test* theme tune to himself. Which you can't hear, obviously.



This is what happens when you shop at C&A, blindfolded and on acid.



Product details

Developer: Infogrames
Publisher: Infogrames
Release Date: March 1998
Website: www.infogrames.fr

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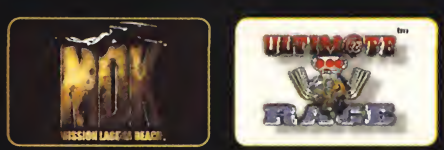

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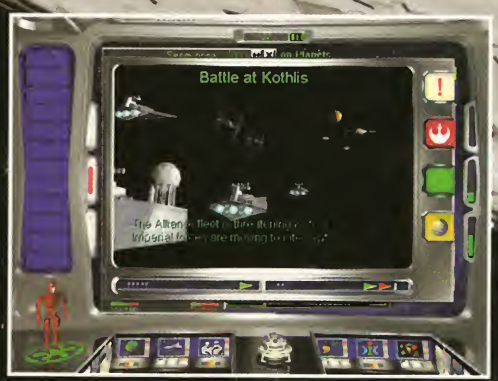
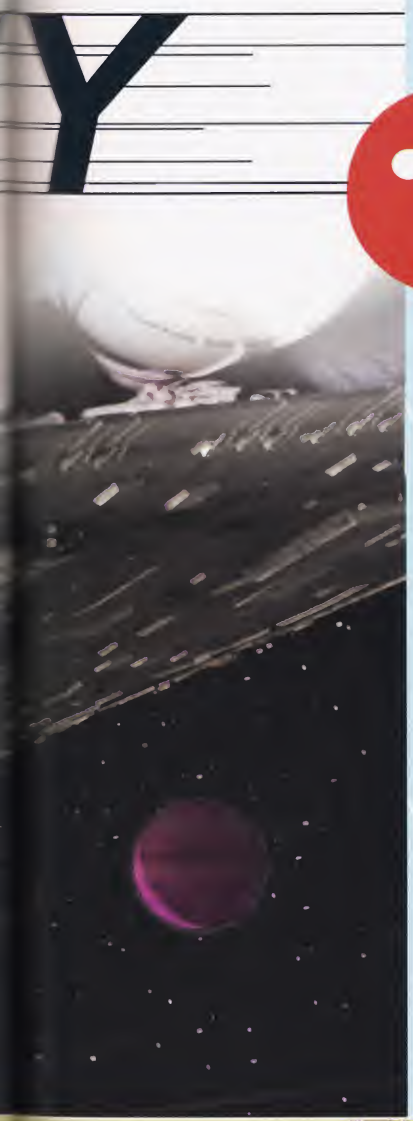
STAR WARS SUPREMAC



Steve Hill went to see *Star Wars* in 1977, and did so again in 1997. That's just the kind of expert knowledge we insist on here at Britain's brightest PC games magazine.



YOU'VE SEEN THE FILMS, READ THE BOOKS, played the games and surrendered meekly to the ruthless marketing. You've probably even pulled yourself around the room to a freeze frame of Princess Leia. So what else remains to be milked from the flaccid breast of the *Star Wars* beast? Another game, evidently. But woah – easy tiger, steady as she goes – not just any old game, a real-time strategy game, with strategy, in real-time, and everything.

Yes, *Star Wars Supremacy* is indeed a bold journey into the hitherto uncharted territory of deep strategy in the *Star Wars* universe. The game is set in the time immediately after the conclusion of *A New Hope*, which, as you'll no doubt be aware, is the proper name of the first *Star Wars* film (or fourth if you want to be arsey about it). While *Supremacy* isn't really story driven, it's always nice to establish some kind of context, so feel free to adopt a deep, ridiculously melodramatic voice as you read the following précis: "The Rebel Alliance has dealt a decisive blow to the Galactic Empire by destroying the first Death Star. Only temporarily thwarted, the Empire regroups to continue its relentless pursuit to crush the Rebellion, while the Alliance has rallied galaxy-wide support for its noble cause. You hold the future in your hands. Subvert the Empire or crush the Alliance. Your choice. Your destiny."

Strength through joy

Assuming command of either the goodies (alas, without Bill Oddie) or the baddies, you are charged with the fairly hefty responsibility of taking over the galaxy. Depending on the length of game required, said galaxy can be limited to 100, 150 or 200 planets, which the player must then go about gaining control of through strategic deftness and tactical

The encyclopaedia contains a wealth of information, such as these crucial Stormtrooper statistics.

savvy. Failing that, you can simply go in there tooled up and start shouting. The key to the entire game is planetary loyalty. This can be swayed through many different methods, and often planets will remain neutral until some factors influence them. In an effort to solicit support for your side, a show of military force is often required. This may be very ▶

Bit part actors

Supremacy is set to feature 60 characters from the *Star Wars* universe: 30 from the Rebel Alliance and 30 from the Galactic Empire.

This has understandably necessitated a certain amount of barrel scraping, with characters drawn not only from the movie trilogy, but from all areas of *Star Wars* fiction, including the Timothy Zahn novels and even the *Dark Horse* comic books, as well as one or two created specifically for the game. Due to the time in which the game is set (post *A New Hope*), there are no characters from *Shadows Of The Empire*.

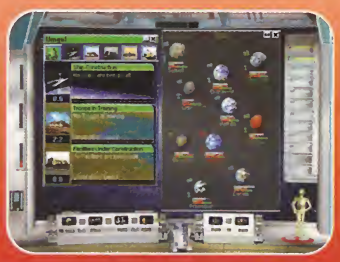
The most casual of fans should be able rattle off Vader, Han Solo, Luke Skywalker, Chewbacca and Princess Leia with a minimum of fuss, maybe even stretch to a Boba Fett and being able to spell Lando Calrissian. But only the more enthusiastic *Star Wars* follower will be readily familiar with the likes of Admiral Thrawn, Mazer Rackus and Labansat. Orrimaarko, anyone?

And if you're sitting there thinking 'Well, actually, I know of all of them and consider them my true friends' then, hey, you must be an interesting guy. Why not drop into the *PC Zone* office some time? We could go for a drink, grab a bite to eat, catch a show, maybe take in a movie? Perhaps employ a prophylactic device? Idiot...

This is the view when playing as the Rebel Alliance. The gimp on the right is C-3PO and the the little bloke is R2-D2. As if you didn't already know.

Encyclopaedia Galactica

Star Wars completists will be pleased to learn that the game incorporates an extensive, nay comprehensive, encyclopaedia providing instant information on every craft, character and planet in the *Star Wars Supremacy* galaxy. It's here that you'll get to know everything you need about relative strengths and weaknesses of every game component – particularly important when you're setting up missions.



effective in the short term, but a resentful planet is more likely to shift loyalties. Espionage or diplomacy is therefore called for, which may take longer to establish loyalty, but will provide a more solid commitment.

Star Wars Supremacy takes the macro approach to strategy gaming. All the action takes place in space over planets, rather than on them. There are two major components of the game, strategic and tactical. The strategic side includes manufacturing, resource management, fleet deployment, mission assignments and exploration. Major decisions are made in the Command Centre, and players are updated on events by their agents – the perennially irritating C-3PO for the Rebel Alliance, and the clearly made-up IMP-22 for the Galactic Empire. Clicking on various star systems reveals a plethora of facts and opens up an array of options.

At first, the game appears extremely daunting, prompting constant groping for the manual. Do not be mistaken, do not be misled, *Star Wars Supremacy* is no fly-by-night pick-up-and-play affair. A good deal of commitment is required before any kind of reward is to be had, but with patience and concentration it gradually starts to come together. While the game does run in real-time, it is essential to dispel any similarity to the likes of *WarCraft 2* or *Command & Conquer*. The gameplay is far more like a *Masters Of Orion* in real-time.

"The game is no fly-by-night pick-up-and-play affair. A good deal of commitment is required before any reward is to be had."

Shut winders, get weshing in

The interface is largely a massive set of windows which pop out of other windows. The most basic window is that of the star map, which denotes the layout of the *Star Wars* galaxy. Space is divided into sectors of ten planets apiece. The larger the game the player decides to start with, the more rim planets there are (hurgh hurgh hurgh - he said 'rim'). The ten core sectors are always the same, and hence the resources are always known for those planets. By double-clicking on any sector, a window will open up and show the layout of each planet. Each planet will have two meters, and various icons surrounding it denoting fleets, facilities, characters and more. By double-clicking on any of the icons around a planet it is possible to organize and deploy fleets, manufacture new units, set up new facilities, and other actions. Cappiche?

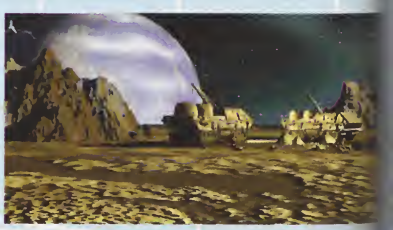
Scrap, scrap, scrap

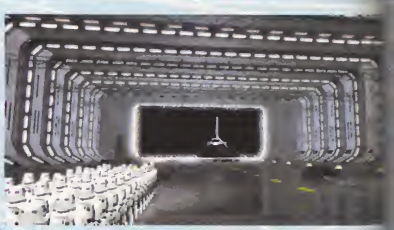
When two opposing fleets meet over the same planet, the tactical component automatically kicks in. This is a separate game element where players can join ships that have been deployed into taskforces or fighter squadrons, and assign orders or targets. All of this takes place in a real-time 3D space-combat engine that's moving as soon as the conflict is joined. The player can arrange fleets in certain formations, give orders and watch the ensuing skirmish from a choice of camera angles. If it becomes evident that you're taking an absolute hiding, there is always the chance to run away. Depending on players' skill, tactical sessions can last up to 20 minutes each, but if you don't fancy your chances, it can be placed on auto-run, enabling you to concentrate on the strategic side of things.

Who you're fighting for - Alliance or Empire - has a great bearing on the outcome of a battle. There's a big difference between a Star Destroyer and a Mon Calimari Cruiser. For the game to work, LucasArts will have to ensure that the two sides are fairly evenly matched. In the films, Star Destroyers are big, heavy, armed to the teeth and very dangerous. The Rebels should therefore have speed, agility and guile on their side, if there's any justice in the cosmos.

Character assassination

Characters are also very important. A significant part of gameplay consists of missions that must be assigned to achieve specific goals. You might have to send characters on diplomatic trips to sway a system's loyalty, get them to sabotage planetary defences, or rescue another character who has been captured. By assigning a character with suitable attributes, the chances of that mission succeeding are greatly enhanced. For example, if a player seeks to convince a planet to be loyal to the Rebellion, and wishes to take a more diplomatic tack to





(Above) Calm down, calm down! All these shots are taken from the intro, some parts lifted directly from the film. (Left) Well, that'll be yer Princess Leia then, won't it? Spunky lady.

(Above left) ***Star Wars*** **enthusiasts will recognise this as the planet Drall. Come on, try harder. (Centre) A battle sequence in full effect. Can you guess what they are yet? (Right) This is the view when playing as the Empire. That red thing is the droid IMP-22 and you're currently rubbernecking the residents of Yavin, including a few ace faces.**

Product details

Developer: LucasArts
Publisher: Virgin Interactive
Website: Summer
Release Date: www.vie.com

achieve that loyalty, the player might assign Mon Mothma, card-carrying politico and leader of the Alliance. At the same time, precisely because she is a diplomat and thus not militarily powerful, she's vulnerable to capture, which would then necessitate a rescue mission.

Big log

LucasArts have pretty much taken carte blanche with the characters, which could upset rabid purists. For instance, Lando may not begin the game on Bespin, which could cause some fretfulness. Certain characters, such as Luke and Darth Vader, have the use of the Force, which they can use to increase their other abilities such as combat, sabotage and diplomacy. When the game begins, Luke is not yet a Jedi and at some point he leaves the game to go log balancing in a swamp with that ridiculous puppet. While he's gone, the player doesn't have the use of him.

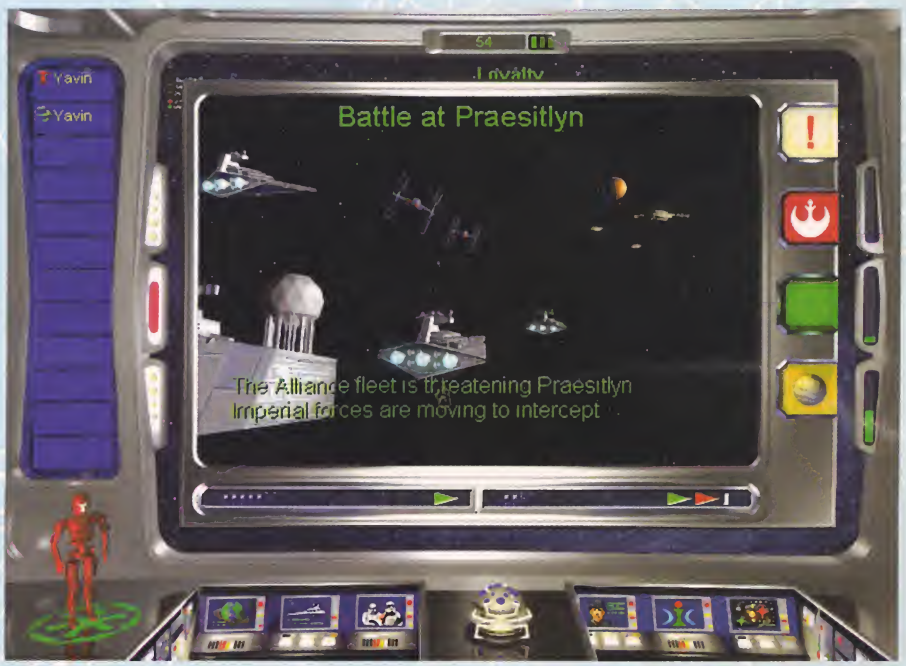
Furthermore, there are relationships between characters. When Vader and Luke occupy the same sector, they will be able to sense one another. Often the two will be drawn towards one another, leading to a conflict that can result in one or the other being captured, depending upon their abilities at that point in the game. Should Luke get captured, Han Solo and Lando may want to make a rescue attempt, even if the player doesn't. Such a scenario can end with the other characters getting captured, and so on it goes.

Winners dinners

Victory conditions are clearly specified. For an Alliance win, the player must capture Darth Vader, Emperor Palpatine and seize the Imperial Seat on Coruscant. To win for the Empire, the player must capture Luke Skywalker, Mon Mothma and destroy the Rebel headquarters, which is randomly placed at the beginning of each game and has the advantage of being mobile. Neither of these are easy tasks, and hours of play are required before you even get a sniff. There are varying difficulty levels for novice and veteran players, and it's possible to go head-to-head across a LAN or a pair of modems, providing some hot two-player action. Internet possibilities are also being investigated.

So it looks like LucasArts have got all to play for. Hopefully they'll get it right with *Star Wars Supremacy* and not have to depend solely on the kind of people who'd gladly buy everything with *Star Wars* written on it.

A battle at Prestatyn, or is that Praesitlyn?



Which side are you on, boys?

The most important decision you have to make comes before the game even begins: which team will you pin your colours on – a choice that probably speaks volumes about you as a person.

Of course, the decent and proper thing to do would be to choose the Rebels, plucky heroes fighting the oppressive forces of evil. *Star Wars* is fundamentally a battle between good and evil, and any normal, right-thinking person would gladly give their all to free the galaxy of the Imperial aggressors, ensuring a peaceful, harmonic existence. Bloody do-gooders. Come round here with your mystical New Age bollocks, and we'll set the dogs on you, Force or no Force. And you can get that walking carpet out of here as well.

Alternatively, there's the mighty Galactic Empire. At least they're English (as are most villains in American-made films), and if they're good enough for Peter Cushing and Mr Bronson out of *Grange Hill*, then they've got to be worth a look. The hardware's a bit more modern than that Rebel junk, and the uniforms are a lot smarter. Mind you, that wheezing could seriously get on your tits.

WARHAMMER: DARK OMEN

If Charlie Brooker had a hammer, he'd swing it in the morning. He'd swing it in the evening. All over this land. Fortunately for us, they don't allow hammers in the medium secure unit to which his movements are currently restricted.

"Entire armies of rotting corpses scramble out of the ground and line up to do your bidding."

DARK OMEN, YOU MAY RECALL, IS A 3D-a-licious real-time military strategy game based on Games Workshop's ever-popular *Warhammer* tabletop series. And it's from Mindscape. Er, not. No, the entire project (complete with programming team) is now under the wing of the gargantuan Electronic Arts. Just to confuse the matter further, it's actually being worked on at the Bullfrog building in Guildford. With a spinning head and growing sense of confused disorientation, your faithful correspondent arrived in said sunny location, met project leader Nick Goldsworthy, and sat down for a bit of a natter and that...

The preliminary design for the Millennium Dome interior met with harsh criticism from church leaders.

PC Zone: So what's going on then? *Dark Omen* used to be a Mindscape project. What's it doing here?

Nick Goldsworthy: Well, we [Electronic Arts] had a new director of development joining us – he'd previously been head of R&D at Mindscape. He came over here and took over UK development. We were looking for a new project, when we got an offer from Mindscape to sign up *Dark Omen* and publish it as an EA game. We were also given the chance to buy their development team from them. They were on a strict deadline to get the game out, so we thought, 'let's buy the project and the team, then we can bring them here and give them more time to get the game finished'. We've got a strong publishing record here, a better distribution network, we've got in-house audio and video artists, so we can put a lot more polish on this product.

PCZ: Sounds a bit like a football transfer really. Were the team relieved to suddenly find themselves with more time to complete the game?

NG: Well, yeah. They were pleased about it. Mindscape were looking to close down some areas, so I think the team was quite happy to still have jobs.

Omen time for tea

For the uninitiated, a brief history lesson: *Dark Omen* is actually the second game to be based on the Games Workshop *Warhammer* licence. The first release, *Shadow*

Look, it's a war. There's people dying and everything. Arrows flying. Axes embedded in faces. The works.

All the in-game artwork is based on the original Games Workshop material. The main difference is that you can't paint the sprites yourself, like you can with the figures. Well, you *can* paint them – but only if you're 'magic'. Like Paul Daniels.

Product details

Developer: Electronic Arts
Publisher: Electronic Arts
Website: www.ea.com
Release Date: February 98

Of The Horned Rat, was extremely faithful – some might say too faithful – to the official *Warhammer* rulebook. Many elements – such as cannons which randomly backfire, killing half your troops – work well in a tabletop battle involving painted figurines, dice, rulers and a couple of your most bearded mates, yet simply serve as an irritant in the context of a fast-moving computer game. For *Dark Omen*, the team have been given permission to bend the rules in the interests of smooth, immediate and much more satisfying gameplay.

And when Nick mentions polish, he isn't kidding. Since *PC Zone* last had a gander at the game, *Dark Omen* has been given a full-on presentational makeover. The result: a once good-looking title now looks absolutely great, as you can see. Aside from some truly incredible FMV sequences (which for once actually hold the attention of the viewer rather than have them reaching for the 'skip' button), the game oozes quality from every pore. Even the menus are pretty. The game itself is even better.

What we have here is a very slick-looking piece of Tolkien-esque armed conflict, with immense battles played out on a sumptuous 3D landscape (there's a wide variety of different terrain) which the player can zoom and rotate throughout the game. The troops are faithful recreations of the original *Warhammer* figurines, there are plenty of pyrotechnics (courtesy of an unusual particle effect system) and more nail-biting strategic manoeuvres than you'll find in the back row of a cinema during a weekend midnight performance. All in real-time.

Zone sat and watched as Nick and a colleague indulged in a brief two-player skirmish to demonstrate some of the game's finer points. It's clear that besides being a complex strategy title, *Dark Omen* is also refreshingly bizarre. Aside from hulking great Tree-men (they don't live in the trees – they *are* trees) and loopy magical spells (one of which features a decidedly *Monty Python*-esque gigantic green foot, which suddenly looms into view and stomps upon all and sundry), there are laughs-a-plenty to be had with the living dead (entire armies of rotting corpses scrambling out of the ground then lining up in formation to do your bidding), a magic sword which causes an enemy's brain to explode, and the occasional innocent civilian running around on fire. There's also true line-of-sight (à la *Total Annihilation*) and an unfolding storyline in single-player mode. Yum? Yum.

Smack my pitch up

PC Zone: Let's say our readers have the attention span of a gnat, and are flipping through the magazine with an air of slack-jawed detachment. What soundbite could you give in order to convince them to pay attention to *Dark Omen*?

NG: Well, for one thing, we're all real games players here. When we took on this project we said: 'Okay, we've got an extra six months – let's not rush it, let's play-test all the levels and make sure we get it right'. A good sign is that even though they've been working on it for a while, people here are playing it in their lunchbreaks and in the evening. The Bullfrog testers came down and asked for a copy so they could play too. You know you're onto a good thing if you've got people actually wanting to play it in their spare time.

PCZ: That's it? Come on, give us a *real* sales pitch.

NG: A sales pitch from a development person? Okay... If you want something that looks beautiful, with great graphics and audio, and that's also extremely addictive, then *Dark Omen* is for you. Developers always say that sort of thing. Except this time it's, you know, true. I don't think there's anything else quite like this. You've got the adventure in there, it's very easy to pick up and play. We spent three months fine-tuning the control interface, trying out different combinations until we got it just right. We're trying to focus not just on the hobbyists, we want the game to have a wide appeal. We've put a lot of effort into it. It's good.

(Below, from top) A scary, scythe-wielding skeleton yesterday; a bearded wizard bloke yesterday; some war yesterday.

(Above left) Hello, my name's Graham. Use me like a bitch. I love it. (Above right) The Teletubbies ran for cover as all hell broke loose among the film crew. Soon the normally tranquil green was red with the blood of the fallen. Uh-ohhh...

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DAIKATANA

IT IS ONLY A COUPLE OF MONTHS BEFORE YOU WILL GET TO SEE *DAIKATANA* IN ITS FULL GLORY. THE EVER-IMPATIENT DAVID MCCANDLESS PUMPS PRODUCER JOHN ROMERO FOR MORE INFORMATION...

WITH OUR SPOOGE CANNONS retching hoarsely after *Quake II*'s release, we've dreaded the forthcoming months. A whole flotilla of awesome *Quake*-powered 3D shoot 'em ups are coming our way. *Half-Life* and *SiN* are due over the next few months, while *Unreal*'s due any day now. But the big one we're all waiting for is *Daikatana*, John Romero's time-travelling romp, whose construction we've been following for several months. Can ex-iD Software Romero out-do *Quake II* and his iD pals? What's going on at ION Storm? And what's all this talk of 'bone washing'? Do you want me to smack you down? You do? The questions – and many more – are answered here in our interview.

PC Zone: Hi. John?

John Romero: Hi. What the-? I've been waiting until, like, 4am for your call, you dumb shit.

PCZ: *(A little nervously)* Er, sorry. Er, um...

JR: Hah hah, not really. We were playing deathmatch until 4am. *Age Of Empires* deathmatch. It's really cool.

PCZ: So have you got the deathmatch in *Daikatana* up and running yet?

JR: Nope. We're concentrating on single-player right now. But don't worry, it'll rock.

PCZ: How's *Daikatana* doing generally?

JR: It's doing great. We've got the *Quake II* code now and we're busy integrating all that stuff with our code – you know, coloured lighting, new sound code, DLL management. Plus we've got our own stuff going. We've got this cool flying camera which will follow you *Jedi Knight*-style, as well as different physics and a different palette per episode for the software version.

PCZ: How long's that going to take?

JR: Well, most of the levels are done now. We're just going to get our designers to go back and start adding the coloured lighting. I thought some of the lighting in *Quake II* was overdone, so we're going to learn how to do it well.

PCZ: Have there been any major changes to the *Daikatana* design?

JR: Nope. It's still the same. It's all in the design doc. We've changed some of the storyline, just minor stuff. We've got our writer, Christian Divine [a Hollywood scribe no less] working on all the cinematic dialogue for the cut-scenes, and the menu system's been tweaked.

PCZ: Any changes to the team?

JR: We've got this one new texture guy. He's awesome, the best we've ever seen. He's doing the textures for everything. And he's really, really good. Kenneth Scott is his name. He runs the SkinForge on Slipgate Central.

PCZ: You said publicly that *Quake II* was "the greatest game you had ever played". Do you still stand by this?

JR: Oh yeah. It's great. I played the demo but I didn't like it; the 10MHz input sucked, I didn't like the weapons, and it was all set in a base level. Like, we've never seen that before.

PCZ: But the full game?

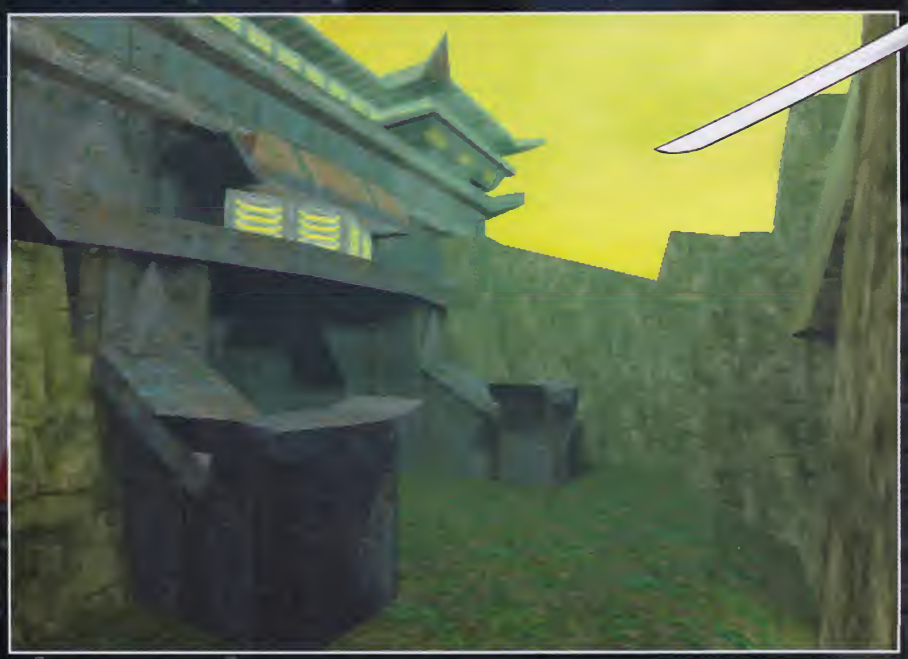
JR: The full game is so much better. It's awesome. You really get into it, especially when you reach the mines and different locations. It's so cool. I still don't think much of the weapons. I mean, you got that fizzle gun thing, rocket launcher and BFG. They're three delayed-hit weapons. The rest – the shotgun and chaingun and so on – are standard instant hit stuff. The grenade launcher is the same. I dunno, I think they could've done more. Like we're going to do with *Daikatana* – it'll have 30 weapons.

PCZ: What about the deathmatch?

JR: Yeah, it's cool. Kind of annoying there are no deathmatch levels. I mailed them and said we'd convert the *Quake* DM levels to *Quake II*, but they haven't replied yet. Hah.

(Right) The inclusion of hand-to-hand weapons should make for some interesting melee combat situations, especially in deathmatch mode.

A DIARY PART 3



PCZ: *Daikatana* slipped from its initial Christmas release date. What were the major speed bumps?

JR: When we were doing *Quake* we were an established team and we had loads of graphics and we mixed old stuff with new. With *Daikatana* we're developing from scratch, going forwards and back. Building tools, getting the style right. So the delay is to do with that – making sure we get it right.

PCZ: Where's *Daikatana* going to fit in a post-*Quake II* universe?

JR: We're doing it differently. We're not just making a bunch of 3D levels and throwing in a ton of monsters. I don't want to be fighting the same monsters at the end of the game that I was at the beginning. We're doing four completely different episodes, with different weapons and different bad guys. I want people to play the game and be like, 'Woah. Just look at all that shit!'.

PCZ: What cool stuff have you got planned?

JR: We're going to have two extra characters, SuperFly Johnson and Mikiko. And we've split the player model up into three, so there's none of that rotating on your axis shit when you look down – the torso will actually bend over or turn sideways when you look. That's cool. We're got crouching and climbing ladders, and we might have that jumping and grabbing hold of an edge stuff, like *Prince Of Persia*.

PCZ: Cool. Are there any other ION Storm projects on the go?

JR: Yeah. We're already planning *Daikatana II*, which is going out to a different company – Human Head, a bunch of ex-Raven guys. It's going to be pretty different, maybe even a hardcore D&D game like *Ultima OnLine*. But it's not going to have people knitting socks and dumb shit like that. I want people to make weapons, scour out dungeons and destroy everything.

PCZ: Destroy everything?

JR: Yeah. In *Ultima Online* there are these people who buy leather, make shirts, and then go round the villages selling them and making a name for themselves. What the f-? You want to crack some skulls and kill shit.

PCZ: You're going to keep the gore in *Daikatana*?

JR: Yeah, but we're not going over the top. We'll have fountains of gibitude and meat showers.

PCZ: We notice that you signed up Warren Spectre [ex-Origin, *Ultima Underworld* guru] to work at ION Storm.

JR: Yeah. He's cool. He's doing a spy game with the *Unreal* engine.

PCZ: We love Warren Spectre. He's our hero. We met him at a show once and...

JR: You gave him a good bone washing, right?

PCZ: A what?

JR: *(Giggling)* You gave Warren Spectre a bone wash. Hahahahaha.

PCZ: Hmmm. Don't you think that people are going to get bored of 3D shoot 'em ups? Well, Romero?

JR: I don't think so. They're buying the shit out of it. And, you know, with real-time strategy games you can say some are shit and some are great. With the 3D shooters – *Half-Life*, *SiN*, *Jedi Knight* – they're all good. In their own way. There isn't a crap one there.

PCZ: And where does *Daikatana* fit in?

JR: It's completely different. Four different episodes, loads of new stuff. It's going to be a great adventure and a cool game. So bear with us.

ION Storm are hard at work integrating *Quake II*'s new lighting code into *Daikatana* – specifically, wee-wee and snot.

***Daikatana*, claims Romero, will feature 30-odd weapons. Or possibly 30 odd weapons. We weren't sure which. However, the guys at ION Storm have clearly been playing *Hexen II*...**

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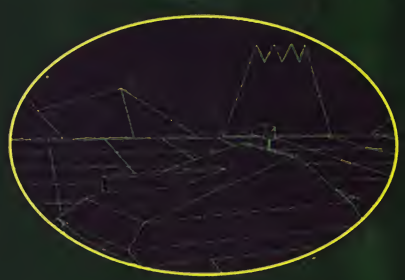

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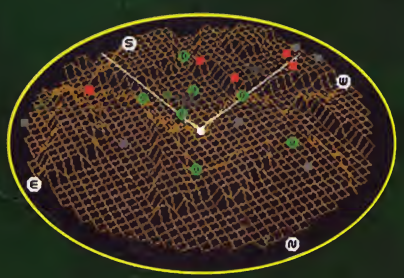

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SiN
Part 2

Steve Hill visited Ritual Entertainment in Dallas, Texas a couple of weeks ago. Sadly, the burritos and nachos are now a distant memory, but he still has plenty to say about the game they're all calling *SiN*.

FOR THOSE WHO FAILED TO COMMIT EVERY word of last month's opening instalment to memory, this brief synopsis should realign your mind and pave the way for an enjoyable trawl through the following infotainment. Hear this: *SiN* is being developed by Ritual Entertainment. Ritual Entertainment are based in Dallas and are essentially a dream team culled from a number of other developers, many from the Dallas area, where 3D action games are breeding like lice. Ritual used to be called Hipnotic Interactive, and their first project was the *Official Quake Mission Pack 1: Scourge Of Armagon*, which, apart from being a bit of a mouthful, was highly fancied by those in the know. *SiN* is their first full game, it uses a version of the *Quake* engine, and it promises much. Got the picture?

Hey Joe

Joe Selinske is the producer for *SiN* and joined Ritual about two or three months into the project, having previously worked with a number of the team and contributed to games such as *Rise Of The Triad*, *Shadow Warrior*, *Terminal Velocity*, *Fury*, *Hellbender*, *Monster Truck Madness* and *CART Precision Racing*. "Of all the games coming out, the 3D action field is the most competitive. It's also the most, I guess, lucrative right now," he says. As for the other developers in the region, Joe admits, "There is rivalry, but there's also camaraderie. We want to do the best we can as regards the competition, but there are some really cool ideas out there and we do actually want to play their games. So we kind of cheer 'em on while at the same time saying under our breath, 'Don't do as good as we do.'"

With the close proximity of other teams, surely there must be some temptation to 'borrow' ideas?

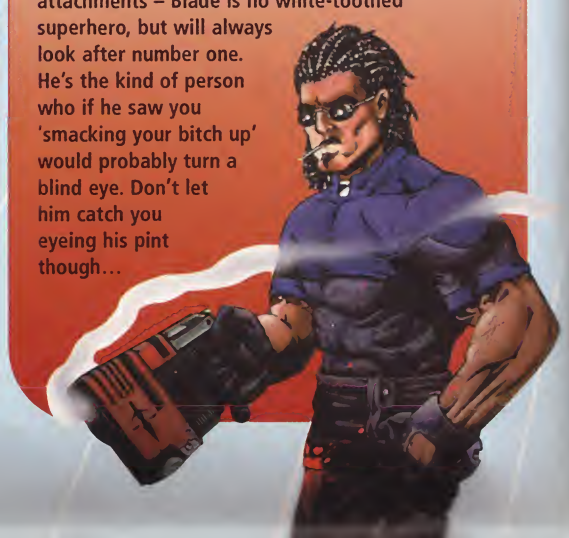
"It would seem like people borrow ideas, but when you're in this kind of genre almost everybody thinks of the same type of thing but with a slightly different twist. So basically the collective consciousness of the area makes it look like we steal ideas, but really it's just a matter of people just trying to come up with good ideas. It's usually the implementation and the integration that makes the difference."

(Above) One of Elexis Sinclaire's SinTEK robots. Walter the Wobot he ain't. (Below) Mutant foot-fetishist ahoy.

"Hold it, Rebel scum!" SinTEK security guards forget for a moment just where the hell they are.

John Blade

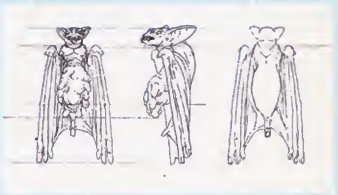
That's you, that is. You're a badass mother, with an Uzi for a brother, and you take shit from no one. Colonel John R Blade is the cagey and hard-bitten leader of the Hardcorps security force that has eventually restored order to the city. With a shady past – and a tight suit with several belts and attachments – Blade is no white-toothed superhero, but will always look after number one. He's the kind of person who if he saw you 'smacking your bitch up' would probably turn a blind eye. Don't let him catch you eyeing his pint though...

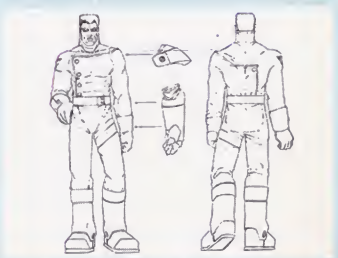


SiN's emphasis is on realism, claims Producer Joe Selinske. So how the heck does the hero's gun fire bullets under water, eh?

Product details

Developer: Ritual Entertainment
Publisher: Activision
Website: www.ritual.com
Release Date: March 98





(Top) Weird bat thing with enormous hanging schlong. (Above) Not-so-weird humanoid thing. Penile-endowment: unknown.

Jackanory

The story behind *SiN* plays a far greater role than simply filling some space on the back of the box, as plot development directly affects the game. Ritual have employed what they call Action Based Outcomes, whereby a certain act will have a knock-on effect in a different area of the game, to the extent that an entire episode could be missed out. Hopefully this will enhance the replay value of *SiN* considerably, thus enabling the phrase 'no two games will be the same' to be bandied about with gay abandon.

As Joe explains, "We've been working on a fairly detailed story, developing the background of the characters, trying to really create our own universe. The hardest part in any 3D action game is trying to relate the story during gameplay, because most people are busy concentrating on the action. Like if you're playing *Quake* it's just intense, you don't want to think about anything, you just kind of go go go! That's why we're introducing JC, the sidekick. We want him to give you hints as well as relate what's going on around the game. He'll be there to offer you all types of information. We also want to do some in-game cinematics that will help to progress the story along the way."

***"All the way back to* Doom *we've seen action but not a lot of story."* Joe Selinske, Producer**

With ION Storm's forthcoming *Daikatana* also featuring an extensive storyline, this could be the way forward, as Joe points out: "We have to start pushing the genre to ▶

SiN makes full use of the *Quake* engine's enhanced colour schemes and lighting system.

Elexis Sinclaire

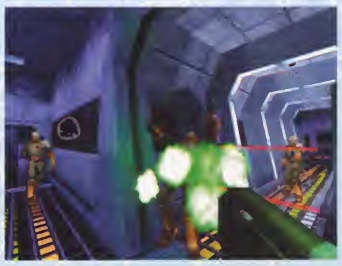
Despite sounding like a character from *Dynasty*, Elexis Sinclaire is a brilliant bio-geneticist who owns and operates SinTEK Industries, a leading corporation in nucleotide research and robotics. A bit of an eco-terrorist, she feels that humans are imperfect and need adjusting.

She's clearly experimented a little too much on herself and is a self-styled Mad Genius. She wears a series of futuristic leather outfits, has a twisted sense of humour and may be bisexual. But a pair of women together is a thing of rare beauty. Natural and graceful, like two swans on a lake... gulp.

(Above left) Joe Selinske, the producer of *SiN*. (Above right) Robert M Atkins, who also goes under the names Jesus Christ and Bad Mother. As an artist, he draws the pictures 'n' stuff using a 'puter.

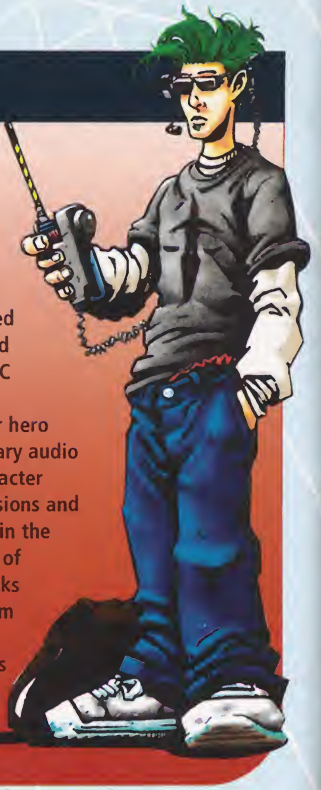
the next level, we have to do the hybridisation. Everybody knows what an action game is. All the way back to *Doom*, we've seen a lot of action but not a lot of story. What we're trying to do with our Action Based Outcomes will hopefully keep people intrigued. They'll want to come back and try different things in the game." Ritual have also adopted a fairly original slant regarding the weapons in *SiN*, hoping to achieve a greater balance than in *Quake*, where the rocket launcher is king. To this extent they're planning to employ different weapons for the multi-player and single-player games. *SiN* will also come with a number of specifically designed deathmatch levels, with others inevitably set to appear on their website. Another original idea is the appearance in the game of consoles, whereby the player can hack into various systems, discover passwords and read people's e-mail to glean useful information.

Enter the corporate world of *SiN* and do bloody murder on horrible working class types.



(Above) The guards always hated intruders armed with the dreaded mucus missile. (Below) I'm looking for Roswell – do you know the way?

JC



JC's a cocky, wisecracking expert computer hacker, whom Blade once caught infiltrating his system. He offered JC two choices: be punched hard about the face and neck, or accept a job. JC chose the latter, and communicates with our hero through a special military audio uplink. JC handles character debriefings before missions and helps the player along in the actual game. He warns of incoming danger, unlocks doors by hacking system securities, updates the player of mission status and is always ready with helpful hints.

Arse crack

Ritual have also made use of the on-line community to ascertain exactly what gamers want. Their website has featured a questionnaire asking what the characters should be called, how they should act and so forth. People were also asked what kind of creatures they enjoyed killing most, and the overwhelming response was humans, which just goes to show what nasty little bastards you really are. But true to their word Ritual took note, and *SiN* will feature the dregs of humanity, including a mutated construction worker, replete with al fresco arse crack and obligatory wolf whistle.

So far, so cool, but what does *SiN* specifically offer that other 3D action games don't? "We've got the integrated storyline," says Selinske. "We're really pushing the realism element, trying to make a more coherent environment so that when you're in a particular area it's distinctive and recognisable and you can identify with it – but it still has to be fun. We've taken the *Quake* engine to the next level."

It looks like *SiN* is going to be a game to be reckoned with – we definitely recommend you tune in to our third instalment next month.

What's the story, mutant gory?

The future – 100 years hence. The government has proven totally ineffectual at running the police force (no change there then) and decided to privatise security. Large corporations seize the opportunity, including one such organisation owned by the uncle of John Blade, the game's main character. Said uncle is murdered and Blade takes over the business, establishing Hardcorps as one of the top security forces in the city (which is unspecified, but probably isn't Milton Keynes).

A recreational drug with no immediately discernible side effects becomes available and proves extremely popular. However, in the past year a disturbing number of grotesquely disfigured mutants have started appearing (a bit like a computer trade show). Through some cunning investigation Blade discovers that a change has been made to the drug at street level, causing these macabre mutations, which is a marginally worse side effect than grinding your teeth like a camel and talking absolute crap to anyone within earshot. Further snooping reveals the source of the rogue drug to be one Elexis Sinclaire, who has taken it upon herself to dabble with evolution, hoping to advance it artificially. She begins her experimentation on general lowlife, but then decides to liven things up by infecting an entire city, which naturally leads to all manner of escapades. You, Colonel John R Blade, must bring this evil narcotic temptress to justice.

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PC Zone ***96%***

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PC Gamer ***90%***

F-16 FIGHTING FALCON
"Accurate modelling coupled with excellent gameplay"
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The Lionhead Diaries

Part one of a new regular column by Lionhead's Steve Jackson.

CO-FOUNDER OF GAMES Workshop, author of *Fighting Fantasy Gamebooks*, game designer and columnist for the *Daily Telegraph*, Steve Jackson is now a director of start-up Lionhead.

Molyneux to quit Bullfrog? The prospect was inconceivable. As well as being one of the world's most respected game designers (he created *Populous, Powermonger, Syndicate, Magic Carpet* and *Theme Park*), he founded the company. Peter and Bullfrog were synonymous. Could he really be abandoning his baby after ten years' success? And if so, why?

Bullfrog had been sold to Electronic Arts two years previously for, as Peter admitted later, "a ridiculous amount of money". As a result he was now a wealthy man – he was even featured in the *Sunday Times'* 1997 Rich List, ranking 755th, along with Roger Moore and Noel Edmonds. But privately he'd never felt at ease in EA's corporate culture. What he really wanted was to get back to his first love - designing games. Peter Molyneux was leaving Bullfrog to return to his roots.

I'd first met Peter a couple of years previously when I was writing a weekly games and puzzles page for the *Daily Telegraph*. I'd arranged an interview for a feature on the Bullfrog success story and the forthcoming release of *Dungeon Keeper*. The interview lasted over two hours, with much of it spent discussing a mutual interest, German boardgames. As a result we began meeting regularly with four other friends from the industry for 'Games Nights'. We still hold these events every fortnight or so, so no doubt they'll creep into this column from time to time.

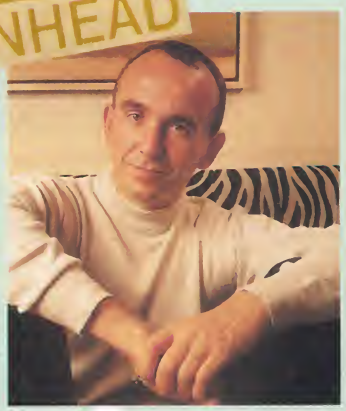
One day, some 18 months after our first meeting, Peter came to my office and confided his plans for the future. He wondered whether I'd be interested in joining his new team. It was an offer I couldn't refuse; after two years as a journalist, I too wanted to get back into creating games, instead of writing about them. There was just one minor drawback – I knew nothing about programming. "That's not a problem," Peter beamed. "It's an asset. Someone has to be the sane member of the team..."

Besides Peter and myself there were to be two other directors in the new company, who I had yet to meet. One was Mark Webley, an easy-going bloke with an offbeat sense of humour. Though he hates the analogy, he's like a slimmer version of John Goodman, co-star of TV's *Roseanne*. At Bullfrog, Mark was something of a rising star – at one point he was responsible for managing the development of around 30 products, and some pundits even predicted he might be offered Peter's old job at the top of Bullfrog. When I first met him in April 97 he was chuffed to bits about the success of his latest game, *Theme Hospital*, which had recently pipped *MDK* to the No. 1 position in the charts.

The other member joining the team was Tim Rance, an ex-systems analyst from the City whom Peter had known since his *Populous* days. Tim had programmed the multi-player version of *Populous* – one of the first mainstream games ever to offer network play. If Mark is John Goodman, Tim is Data. His technical knowledge is awesome. You know all those frustrating little Windows problems which crop up – why is my e-mail coming out as a string of meaningless text? Why is my new mouse leaping all over the screen opening up random windows? – Tim eats that kind of stuff for breakfast.

At our meeting we talked business: duties, budgets, cash flow, space at the E3 trade show in Atlanta and how to get Lara Croft in as our receptionist. But the longest discussion of all concerned the company name. Peter and Mark had originally decided on 'Lionhead' – the name of Mark's pet hamster. Unfortunately, the honour had proved too much for the poor creature. Lionhead died, which we took to be a dark omen – we should pick another name. We came up with a number of possible alternatives: strong contenders were 'Black Box', 'Midnight' and 'Hurricane' (the nickname of Peter's Games Nights), but no clear winner emerged. We ended our first board meeting with some table football and a zany game of croquet.

> ***"Lionhead was actually named after director Mark Webley's dead hamster..."***



There are of course other Lionhead members who deserve a special mention other than Steve Jackson, including (Top) Peter Molyneux, (Above left) Mark Webley, and (Above right) Tim Rance.

Peter called a week or so later. What did I think of 'Red Eye'? We needed to make a quick decision as a magazine was about to run a lengthy interview. Should they call us 'Lionhead' or 'Red Eye'? Having decided that we all liked the new name, the piece subsequently claimed a scoop in being the first to announce what our new company was called. However, we soon realised that we'd been somewhat hasty – it turned out that everyone and their uncle had a company called Red Eye. There was a Red Eye Records, Red Eye Productions... you name it, someone had got there first. And, more importantly, the 'redeye.co.uk' domain name had already gone. The name Lionhead had presented none of these problems; Tim had already registered a 'lionhead.co.uk' website and by now we even had Lionhead business cards, so we reverted to our original choice.

On first impressions 'Lionhead' may conjure up notions of the British lion, the king of the jungle and similar visions of grandeur. The truth is something quite different - the company was actually named after a dead hamster...

NEXT MONTH: Demis arrives – and Lionhead will never be the same again.

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Review ZONE

This month

Well quelle surprise.* Quake II *has been with us for two months now and everyone's still playing it to death. This does not bode well for the flood of* Quake *clones heading our way from all quarters. Have iD created the definitive 3D shoot 'em up? It certainly seems that way. Elsewhere, a growing number of freelancers confess to falling in love with* GTA. *Ahhh!

FLIGHT SIM AFICIONADOS AND REAL-TIME STRATEGY ADDICTS WILL BE PLEASANTLY surprised by this month's review section. We have three of each for your perusal, and some of them are real corkers. This will no doubt be welcome news for those of you who have become bemused with the constant stream of *Quake* clones which have been plaguing the pages of this magazine over the last year or two.

This won't last long, of course – we can confidently expect another flood of 3D shooters over the next few months. The good news on this front, however, is they all look like they're going to be pretty hot. *SiN* is almost finished, Sierra are beavering away at *Half-Life*, and *Unreal* and *Duke Nukem 4 Ever* will hopefully be with us by the end of the summer.

The question to raise at this point is how are any of them going to compete with the incredibly high benchmark set by *Quake II*? There isn't a single *Zone* bod who hasn't been playing *Quake II* to death over Christmas, so our expectations for any pretenders to the throne will be very high indeed.

You can, of course, find out how they all fare by buying *PC Zone* every month (hint, nudge, wink etc). In the meantime, however, why not take a break from the frantic world of 3D shooters and check out a flight sim or two, or even a real-time strategy game? You know it makes sense.

Incidentally, if you're wondering why I'm writing this column, it's because our esteemed Editor Jeremy has spent the entirety of this issue in Tenerife and has only just reappeared (welcome back, mate). Normal service will be resumed next issue.

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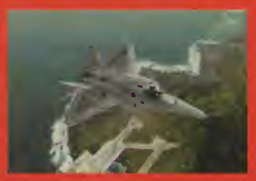

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Scoring system

90+ CLASSIC

The highest accolade a game can attain. Not only is it innovative and highly original, but it's extremely playable and has masses of long-term appeal. Games that receive the 'Classic' award should be seen as a benchmark with which to compare other games of the same genre.

80–89 RECOMMENDED

An excellent game that simply lacks that certain something to make it a gaming classic. It may not be necessarily highly original, but it contains some new ideas and variations that add to the genre that are well implemented. Well worth checking out.

70-79

If a game scores within this bracket it's good, but not good enough to be recommended. It's not exactly original and somebody's probably done it better already, but it's still playable all the same. Basically, it's worth shelling out for, especially if you're a big fan of the genre, but don't expect anything innovative. Whatever you do, don't discount games just because they don't quite hit the recommended mark!

50-69

Games that fall into this bracket are distinctly average and don't really offer anything new. There's nothing much wrong with these titles, but then there's nothing much to recommend them either. They're just average. Okay. Not bad. Alright. We've seen it all before. A lot better on budget. You get the picture.

40-49

Okay, so you're not really going to buy this, are you? We'd advise you not to. It's below average, it's not very playable, you'll probably be disappointed. It had a few nice ideas, but they were badly executed. Give it a miss.

21-39

Oh dear. This should never have got past the ideas stage. It offers absolutely nothing new to the genre, is very limited in terms of gameplay, frustrating to play and ultimately a complete waste of money. Avoid disappointment. Avoid this game.

20 AND BELOW PANTS

Absolutely bloody awful. Unplayable, due to bad design or bugged code. Crap with a capital 'C'. Naff with a capital 'N'. Do not buy this game, it will ruin your life and all those who come into contact with it. It doesn't get much worse than this. Have we made ourselves clear?

In Perspective

This is designed as a purely visual guide to how games of a similar style compare. The bars do not relate to previous review scores... they are simply an indication of how the reviewer feels about the products on a sliding scale.

Game 1

Game 2

ATI 3D Native Version Available

3DBLASTER Native Version Available

3DFX Native Version Available

DIAMOND STEALTH Native Version Available

MATROX MYSTIQUE Native Version Available

POWERVR Native Version Available

The software is designed to take advantage of **D3D**

The software is designed to take advantage of **MMX**

This software will only run under **WINDOWS 95**

The software may run slowly, especially in hi-res mode

The software supports **MICROSOFT DIRECTINPUT**

The software supports **MICROSOFT DIRECTPLAY**

The software supports **INTERNET PLAY**

The software will run acceptably on a **486DX2/66**

THE BENCHMARK PC

At ***PC Zone*** all games are played and tested on a **DAN Technology Pentium 133** with 16Mb RAM, a 2Mb graphics card and a quad-speed CD-ROM drive. We also use Maxi Gamer 3Dfx cards for releases that support D3D and 3Dfx specific games.

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For further details contact Maxi on:

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THANKS THIS ISSUE TO:

Glen @ Psygnosis
Simon @ Acclaim
Lidia @ Eidos
Doug & Jim @ VIE
Steve @ Gremlin
Chris Kramer @ 3Dfx

Cool games

We see hundreds of games over the months but there are a few that we hang on to and continue to play at lunch-time/when we're supposed to be doing more important stuff...

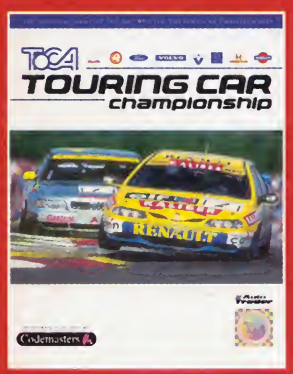
- Quake II
- Actua Soccer 2
- F-22 Air Dominance Fighter
- NBA Live '98
- Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee

Crap games

There are some games that you can leave in the middle of the room with a big sign next to them saying "Please steal me" and you still can't get rid of the bloody things...

- Men In Black
- Monopoly Star Wars Edition
- Postal
- Shanghai: Great Moments
- Sega Worldwide Soccer

ACTION ON THE EDGE OF YOUR SEAT



Cane it round killer bends at 147mph, wheel to wheel in a pack of 16 speeding cars.

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Battle it out against tactically aggressive drivers and as the soundtrack and fx thunder, switch to in-car view as you tear up the finishing straight.

TOCA, real cars, total gameplay.

THE OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION MAGAZINE
9/10
"Superb graphics at a relentless pace... A driving sim of the highest quality"

★★★★★
PC GAMING WORLD
"A great driving experience, excellent realism - too damn good"

PC GAMING WORLD SAYS ..... PLAY IT

Crash Out

Bump & Grind

Thrash It Out

Cane It

Which of these codes enables you to pass through your opponents?

CMCOLLOFF CMNOHITS CMPASS (1 of 3)

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REAL DRIVERS, REAL VIEWS

TOCA

PC ZONE Classic

F-22 Air Dominance Fighter

Ever since a certain incident at a certain party a while back, Paul Presley has been somewhat more sleek and aerodynamic than in previous years. Who better to try his hand at flying the very latest in modern stealth fighter technology?

BEFORE WE START, A PROVISO. IF YOU have anything that even approaches the description 'low-end machine', don't even continue reading. You'll just get yourself worked up into a drooling mess and have nowhere to release the built-up frustrations except in bursts of meaningless violence. We don't want to add yet more fuel to the 'computer games damage our kiddies' argument, do we? If you have to ask whether or not you have a low-end machine, then you do. That said, there's a proviso to this proviso – see the 'Got a low-spec PC?' panel.

Still with us?

Right, with the above in mind, let's start by saying that *F-22 ADF* is brilliant. It's far and away the flight sim of the year, and we've only just started. As soon as you get going you can sense a level of quality far above anything you've played before. Not just the graphics (although, as you can see, they are beyond superb), but everything around you. No flight sim has ever felt this complete. Air traffic controllers guide you around the airports, all of which are alive and buzzing with activity. Commercial as well as military aircraft fill the skies, all following their own patterns and flight paths. Everywhere you look things are happening. The world seems busy and totally unconcerned with your own small part in its existence. Until you start bombing the hell out of it, of course. Just like real life, in fact.

Your aircraft feels real as well. Almost every button, knob and dial can be twisted, turned and fiddled with, and if there's a function the real F-22 can do that isn't simulated here, chances are it's an ultra-top secret one that only the US military and Tom Clancy know about. Flight dynamics feel spot on (like I would know), as do the effect of weapons on their targets. There's even collateral damage to worry about – debris from an exploding building can smack into your craft and knock bits off, like the wings.

Players are guided through the beast using a series of training missions, that go from the simple (take off and landing) to the complicated (dropping laser-guided munitions on nuclear installations) to the anal (radio communications). You even get the chance to fly some missions from an AWACS aircraft, guiding the operations of all the planes

(Right) Detail, detail and more detail. This is a highly detailed flight sim. It's very detailed. Got that?

(Above left) Got 'im. (Bottom left) Bogies at 12 O'Clock. (Above right) Neeeyoooow... Budda-budda-budda. Boom. Rooooaaarrr. *F-22*'s graphics are amazing. The sounds aren't bad, either. But you can still vocalise your own for that personal touch.

in each mission, jumping in and out of cockpits as though you were a rent-boy at a dock-worker's convention.

Tiny little things

Do I have any criticisms of the game? Well yes, a few. But they're so damned petty that if I told you what they were it would make me look bad rather than the game. I don't like the text used for radio communications, for example. The manuals aren't as user-friendly towards novices as they could be. They still don't come close to the classic *Falcon 3.0* manuals with their Flight School section that took you through custom-built missions step-by-step and really made you feel as though you were learning something. Not that these are bad or anything, just not as good as *Falcon 3.0*'s.

I've also encountered a strange bug. Again, this isn't really large enough to qualify as a criticism, just something that I felt was worth pointing out *(Surely, "making consumers aware of" - Ed)*. While taxiing at an airfield, I was somewhat perturbed when a Learjet just drove straight through my plane. That's right, not around it – *through* it. Like I didn't even exist. It's something I've noticed quite a lot. Although you can go through all the proper runway procedures (requesting taxi instructions, waiting for permission, etc), you don't really seem to be there as far as the world is concerned. It's little things like these that take the slight shine off the overall polish.

Oh, and there is one other tiny, little, barely noticeable problem that I also feel ashamed to mention: there are no campaigns or ongoing war scenarios to play.

Campaign in the arse

Here's the thing. *F-22 ADF* doesn't have any kind of campaign-style missions. It has loads of self-contained assignments, split into 'theatre' tours (zones such as Egypt, the Red Sea and Ethiopia as opposed to bombing runs on the Old Vic, the Adelphi and the Southport Palladium). But nothing ongoing. You don't even get the option of selecting which weapons you can use. Everything is pre-planned – you just have to fly the thing.

DID's defence is that they are developing an F-22 Total Air War add-on pack for the middle of 1998 that will make full use of the AWACS command craft and provide you with one of the most comprehensive 'full war' simulations ever seen in a flight sim. But that doesn't disguise the fact that there isn't one here now. Without it, I'm not sure that there are enough single missions to fill the gap. The ones that let you use the AWACS to control things do provide a certain level of randomness each time you play them, but doesn't make for lasting playability. I want to score *F-22 ADF* really highly simply because of the sheer excellence of the simulation. But this single missing element is tying one hand behind my back.

So there you have it. One of the best flight sims I have ever played, but lacking in one vital area. DID are always doing this – getting things almost perfect. *EF2000* was superb, save for some really annoying bugs. *F-29 Retaliator* was superb, save for not being able to land the aircraft properly. *Robocop 3* was superb, save for being based on a shit film that nobody liked. At least they're consistent.

"The world seems totally unconcerned with you. Until you start bombing the hell out of it."

Got a low-spec PC?

I managed to get *F-22 ADF* running on a machine lower than the quoted minimum specs. Obviously you can't expect to bathe in the lavish graphical quality on low-end machines, but you can run it on something as low as a P120. It will still jerk occasionally, so I'd strongly recommend a 3Dfx card even at this level. And don't even think about trying it with less than 32Mb RAM.

The skies are filled with other big aircraft, little aircraft and groovy canopy glare effects.

In Perspective

There have been plenty of F-22 games over the past year – DID's is clearly the best. NovaLogic's *F-22 Raptor* is good but can't compete in the long run. *iF-22* is a novelty that just doesn't work. The only real flying competition comes from *JSF*, and that's a different set of planes anyway.

F-22 Air Dominance Fighter

F-22 Raptor

iF-22

Joint Strike Fighter

Tech Specs

Memory: 16Mb (32Mb for 3Dfx)

Processor: P166

Graphics: SVGA

Sound: All major sound cards

Controls: Joystick, keyboard, mouse, flightsticks

Score

The best flight sim available, with just one really big flaw...

Price: £39.95

Release date: Out now

Publisher: Ocean/DID

Telephone: 0161 832 6633

Website: www.did.com

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NBA Live 98

PC ZONE Classic

Instead of asking somebody who knows a bit about basketball to write this review, we thought it would make a change to get someone completely ignorant but quite tall. Which means Patrick McCarthy.

ANOTHER YEAR, ANOTHER VERSION OF *NBA*. It's been quite a good year for EA, principally because the games that looked as if they had run their course last year have now been successfully reborn and relaunched, especially with the advent of 3D acceleration. *NHL* is a prime example, and now *NBA* can be added to the list. Like *NHL*, it looks so much better than last year's game. Players are now far bigger in the default view, and everything's so clear that, for the first time in any full-team basketball game, you don't lose track of the ball in the pixellated mob when things get crowded around the basket.

The Groin Police check out personal freshness again.

In fact, the graphics are outstanding. Not only are the players much larger, they have their 'proper' faces mapped onto the figures' heads, and you get different sized players, with differing builds (see panel below). And yes, Dennis Rodman's hair does change through the season. Sadly, you don't get to follow him home after the game and watch him shag Madonna while wearing a wedding dress (or whatever he's getting up to these days). Still, you can't have everything.

"The cheerleader movie sequences have been improved and expanded. Let there be dancing in the streets."

Everybody's talkin' at me

Again, as with *NHL*, EA seem to have made a bit of a leap in the commentary stakes, with an improved, more varied and

Too tall!

One of the problems with basketball as a sport is that almost everyone who plays it is simply too big for it. We enlisted our highly-talented *PC Zone* scientists to research the matter and they found that, when basketball was invented in France in 1789, the average height of a tall male – the kind of person who would be naturally drawn to the sport, having basically no friends – was 5'2". The baskets were thus nailed to the wall of the Palace of Versailles at a height appropriately difficult for these people to reach. (It was the frustration of being unable to reach these baskets which later led to the storming of the Bastille, which was where all of the stepladders were kept.) Nowadays, humanity has been struck by the mutant Abnormal Growth gene, producing the medical term known to doctors as 'Lankitwatterhea', the average basketball player is 8'7", and doesn't even have to jump to put the ball in the basket – although they do anyway, just to show off. But they don't really need to. I say: it's time to stop this shameful charade. Put chance back into the sport and put the baskets twice as high again.

(Above) A 3-point comp in all its knuckle-whitening, buttock-clenching excitement. (Above right) Ted's huge testicle fell out the bottom of his shorts again.

flowing commentary which adds to the atmosphere. It doesn't quite reach the heights of that in *NHL*, but that's because it doesn't stoop to openly taking the piss out of the players with the colour commentary; nevertheless, it's certainly among the best. Presentation throughout is (as usual) excellent, with music that equals the output of many popular beat combos.

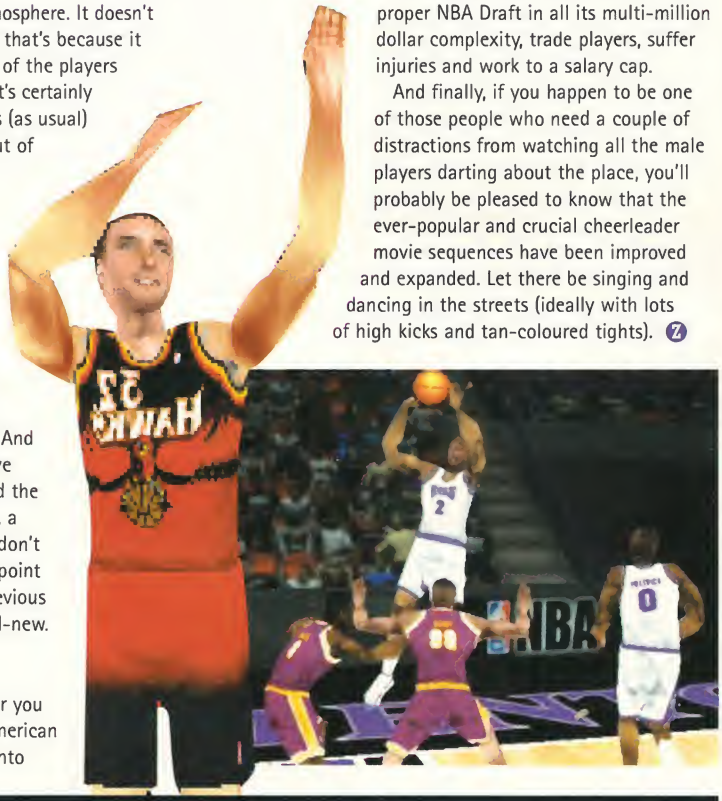
New stuff

Each major *NBA* star likes to have his own individual dunking style with a fancy name (ideally with an apostrophe in it). Many of these are impossible to differentiate between, but who's going to argue with people who are eight feet tall? Anyway, this year, for the first time, these individual moves are faithfully reproduced. And for those of you who never go out, and have thus progressed to a point where you found the previous highest difficulty level rather easy, a fourth one has been added. Oh, and if you don't fancy a full game, you can opt for a three-point competition, which I'm sure I've seen in previous console versions, but which claims to be all-new.

Power corrupts

If merely playing basketball isn't enough for you and you want to get all anal and... well, American about it, you can set up and draft players into your own customised league comprised of anything between four and 32 teams. The general manager mode allows you to run a proper NBA Draft in all its multi-million dollar complexity, trade players, suffer injuries and work to a salary cap.

And finally, if you happen to be one of those people who need a couple of distractions from watching all the male players darting about the place, you'll probably be pleased to know that the ever-popular and crucial cheerleader movie sequences have been improved and expanded. Let there be singing and dancing in the streets (ideally with lots of high kicks and tan-coloured tights).



American technology leads the way

In the past, people thought they were doing a pretty fancy job if they managed to differentiate between different ethnic backgrounds in their visual depiction of the players in a sports game. (Mind you, they didn't always manage to get it right. I seem to remember an early version of *Sensible Soccer* which had a white, ginger-haired Paul Ince – making him white was bad enough, but giving him ginger hair was going too far.) Nowadays though, many of EA's sports games seem to have actual faces of the stars mapped onto the strangely-shaped heads of the players in the game. As a result, things can get pretty disturbing in the close-up shots: they may indeed be the actual faces, but they were obviously measured up while the star held his head out of the window of a speeding Bullet train, or sat nailed to a chair in a wind tunnel. I simply can't think of any other way to account for those strangely distended features.

We now take it for granted that skin pigmentation and even faces match the real thing, but EA have gone one better. *NBA Live 98* has players of different height and build – there's that freak tiny bloke called after a potato, Spud Somebody Or Other – and he's minute in this, too. One bloke is so huge and bulky he looks like he's escaped from the WWF (except he isn't wearing stretchy women's underwear). This is something British developers are starting to do, too. The latest *Actua* has players of different heights, but it's not nearly as obvious as this. Perhaps they should ignore accuracy and just go for cartoon exaggeration: Paulo Wanchope would be 25 feet taller than everyone else and keep banging his head on the floodlights; Ian Dowie would have the developers applying for an 18-certificate from the censors; Paul Gascoigne would lumber about like Tor Johnson out of *Plan 9 From Outer Space* in a wig; and Roy Keane would just be a short hairy arsehole.

In Perspective

Easily the best PC basketball game, with several graphical and gameplay improvements over last year's offering. The best sports game of any type is still *NHL 98*. But as far as basketball goes, apart from EA's other efforts there's very little to compare *NBA* to, so we'll chuck in some other sports games that have tall people in them.

NBA Live 98

NBA Live 97

NHL Hockey 98

Tech Specs

Memory: 16Mb

Processor: P190

Graphics: VGA (3Dfx recommended)

Sound: All major sound cards

Controls: Keyboard, joystick, gamepad, mouse

Score

Bigger, prettier, cleverer. Which means much better.

90

Price: £44.99

Release date: Out now

Publisher: Electronic Arts

Telephone: 01753 549442

Website: www.ea.com

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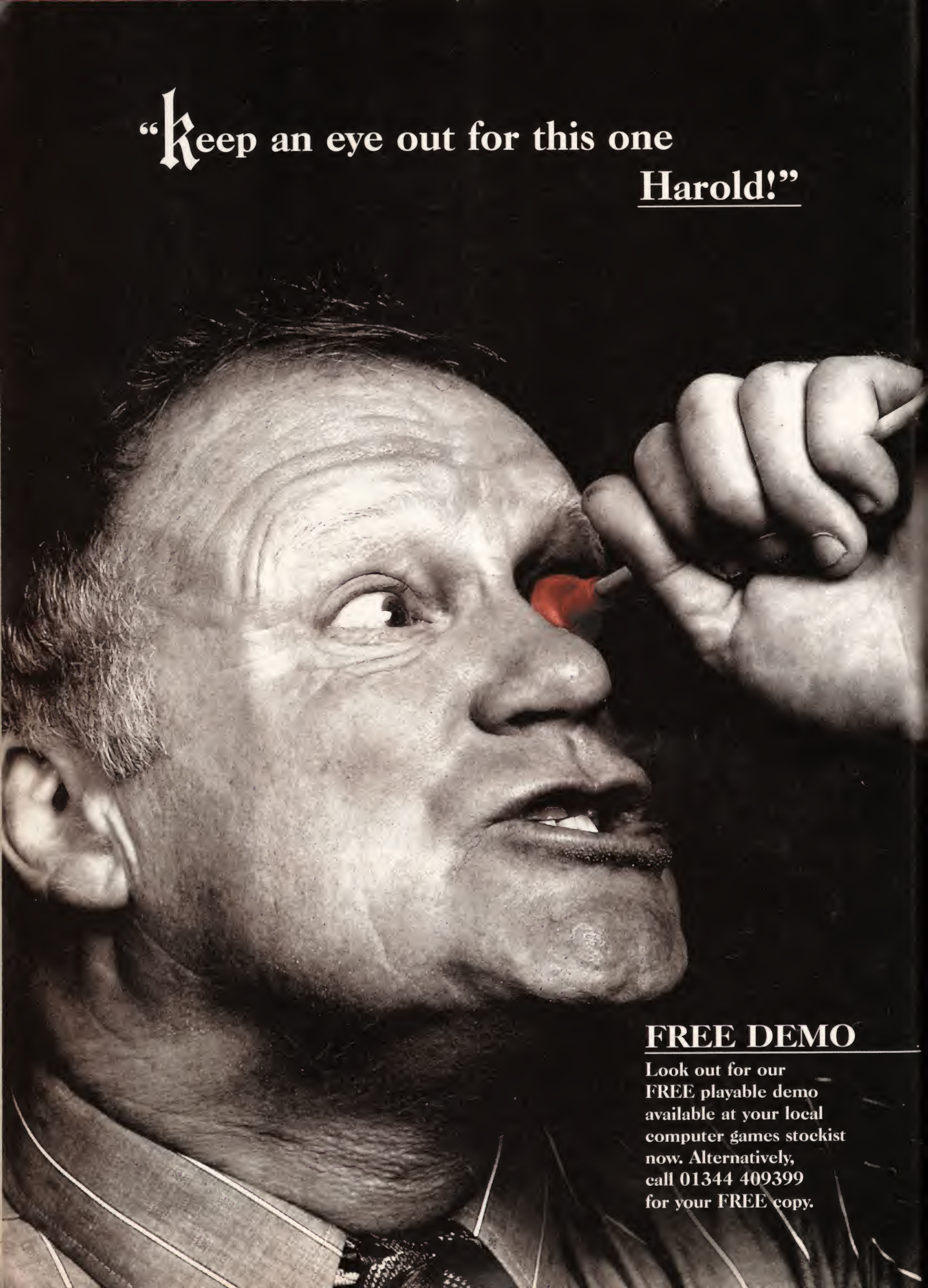
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SEVEN KINGDOMS

Designed by Trevor Chan

Seven Kingdoms is a real-time strategy game of empire building and conquest. It requires a blend of diplomacy, shrewd trading, espionage, cunning and sheer brute military might to triumph.

'The most important strategy game since Civilization II'
Powerplay

'Get ready to rumble with gusto'
PC Format

'...has an attractive blend of action and strategy...we're impressed'
NetGamer

'A subtle game with countless possibilities'
PC Zone Benelux

'Seven Kingdoms may earn the title of Civilization of the real-time strategy games'
The Adrenaline Vault

'...not only managed to clench the throat (of Warcraft II) but...ripped out the heart and stamped on the guts as well'
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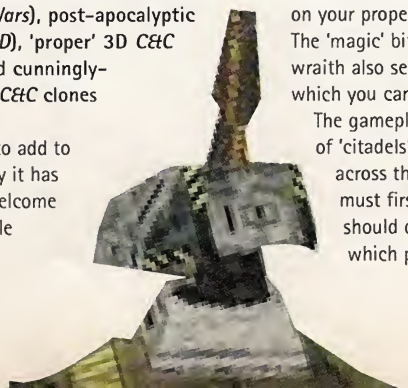
Uprising

(Left) Coventry goes up in flames: a triumph of righteous justice. (Below) Various war machines attacking Coventry with relish.

Charlie Brooker has inspired many an uprising in his time. In fact, every time we look at him our breakfasts rise up and demand the right to leave our stomachs, forcefully and quickly. And all over our new shoes. That'll leave a nasty stain, you know.

SINCE THE SUCCESS OF *COMMAND & Conquer* many moons ago, real-time strategy games have swept across the PC game release schedules like a virulent summer heat rash over an overweight long-distance lorry driver's pasty white buttocks *(Was that really necessary? – Ed)*. At one point, you could barely move for mouse pointers round here, such was the games industry's dedication to foisting all manner of 'digital toy soldiers' games upon us. We've had weird biological *C&C* clones (*Gene Wars*), post-apocalyptic dino-centric *C&C* clones (*KKND*), 'proper' 3D *C&C* clones (*Total Annihilation*), and cunningly-disguised-as-an-Amiga-game *C&C* clones (the Bitmap Brothers' *Z*).

Well, *Uprising's* another one to add to the long list, although thankfully it has a new heading all of its own. Welcome to the all-new *MechWarrior*-style C&C clone.



Plot, plot, fizz, fizz

Here's the story behind the game. It's the year 3082. Ant and Dec (of TV/crap single fame) are now omni-powerful media moguls, each with a personal fortune so large they've had to build special 'bank planets' three times the size of Jupiter in order to store just *half* of their cash. They're so rich, they can afford to employ Bill Gates to lick their bottoms clean after they've done poo-poos, while the Sultan of Brunei is paid to shake the last drops off whenever they do a piddle. Anyway, following a minor backstage misunderstanding, the pair have fallen out and vowed to destroy each other completely. To this end, they've bought a planet and decided to host a special war on it, just for them. This war provides the action for *Uprising*.

We're just being stupid, of course – ho, ho, aren't we a pack of cards? – but let's face it, you don't really give a fiddler's pluck about the 'proper' storyline anyway. What you want to know is this: *Uprising* may be the 10,546th entry into the real-time strategy canon, but it's original enough and entertaining enough to be a worthwhile play. Allow us to illuminate.

The bulk of the action takes place in a first-person, real-time 3D view, with the player controlling a magic tank thing called a 'wraith' (we prefer 'magic tank thing' ourselves). The wraith can do more or less anything a *Quake* player can, except jump; your ability to succeed in battle depends largely on your propensity for strafing from side to side all the time. The 'magic' bit comes in as soon as you realise that the wraith also serves as a kind of mobile command centre, from which you can control an entire army. Wooh.

The gameplay revolves around the capture and deployment of 'citadels', military bases which are scattered liberally across the landscape. To capture an enemy citadel, you must first destroy every building in the area (which should delight any teenage vandals out there), at which point you may claim it as your own by

manoeuvring on top of a target point and pushing a button.

Once established, your base can be used to manufacture forces: infantry, tanks, aircraft – you name it. These forces sit invisibly in the ether for a while, until you decide to call them into play. How does that work? Well, let's imagine you're in your wraith, pootling around the countryside, when suddenly you encounter a bunch of enemy troops. You can take them all on by yourself, but since you've got back-up you might as well use it: simply target an enemy unit, then press a key to summon one of your tanks (or a bomber, or infantry, etc), then join in the massive barney that ensues. At first, the way your troops arrive – teleporting out of nowhere – is a little disconcerting and perhaps a little, ahem, 'unbelievable', but apprehension soon transforms into excitable megalomania once you realise that with a sizeable army at your disposal, it's possible to literally point at something and see it destroyed before your eyes. Before long, you're reeling around the killing fields, drunk on power and the blood of the fallen. In other words, you *do* get involved.

"Before long you're reeling around the killing fields, drunk on power and the blood of the fallen. In other words, you do get involved."

It could be you

Like *Total Annihilation* before it, *Uprising* uses a cunning ruse to keep its audience involved: it places a player-controlled character right in the thick of the action. Success depends upon your ability to use captured enemy citadels and your amassed forces in a sensible manner, combined with your ability to blast the crap out of everything from the wraith. It's not *quite* as life-or-death as *TA*, mind – your wraith can be quickly reincarnated should you die. But it's still pretty exciting.

And it should last a while, too: there are plenty of missions (including a superbly coherent trio of step-by-step training levels), a multi-player mode, and a 'quickstart' option for those who can't wait to leap into the thick of things. So that's the good news. Now for the bad...

Well, there are a few flaws. The graphics for one: they're not particularly good, even with a 3Dfx card. They're not *bad* either, they're simply a bit... well, *dull*, really. Then there's the amount of keyboard shortcuts the player is required to remember: keys for summoning tanks, keys for summoning soldiers, keys for rotating turrets and bringing up satellite maps, keys for selecting different weapons... it's the price you pay for moving the *C&C* action from a top-down to an in-cockpit view, of course, but somehow you can't help feeling they could have made it all a *tad* more intuitive.

And finally, there's the 'jack-of-all-trades' phenomenon. By striving to please both the tenuously cerebral *C&C* crowd and the knuckle-dragging, hard-nosed, 3D action fanatics at once, *Uprising* is in danger of disappointing both. *C&C* aficionados may find the strategic elements too simplistic, while the thugs may feel the action lacks a certain bite. It also takes quite a while to get the hang of things, but those who persevere will find it soon becomes strangely moreish.

Not an epoch-shatterer by any means, but a worthwhile diversion nonetheless.

(Above left) Coventry, moments before the attack. (Above right) Coventry burns once more. Ha ha. Die, Coventry, die.

In Perspective

Since *Uprising* contains elements that evoke memories of both *Command & Conquer* and *MechWarrior*, we'll judge it accordingly, because we're reknowned for our fair-minded approach to absolutely every single thing that ever there was. Which is what you've come to expect from us, isn't it?

Uprising

Command & Conquer

Total Annihilation

MechWarrior

Tech Specs

Memory: 16Mb

Processor: P90

Graphics: SVGA

Sound: Windows compatible sound cards

Controls: Mouse, keyboard

Score

An interesting take on the real-time strategy genre.

79

Price: £TBC

Release date: Out now

Publisher: 3DO/Ubi Soft

Telephone: 0181 944 9000

Website: www.3do.com

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Test Drive IV

Any regular *PC Zone* readers are likely to be tiresomely familiar with the following piece of self-referential trivia: I, Mr Charlie Brooker, do not hold a driving licence.

I HAVEN'T SAT BEHIND THE WHEEL OF A real car in years. I don't actually know what a clutch does. I frequently experience massive brain haemorrhaging at the sight of Jeremy Clarkson (but then who doesn't?). You get the picture. It's inconvenient in day-to-day life (you should see my collection of taxi receipts), but a godsend when it comes to writing the intros to racing game reviews. A quick dash of irony to kick things off. Here I am reviewing a driving game and – would you believe it – I can't even drive! Ho-ho-ho.

Problem is, there's a surprising number of people out there who take both real-life driving and driving games very seriously. Very seriously indeed. For instance, a few years ago at the *Computer Shopper* show, a half-washed, cock-eyed, straggle-bearded nonentity approached the *PC Zone* stand and began loudly berating us all because six months previously, in a review of *IndyCar Racing*, the erstwhile Duncan MacDonald had mentioned that the handling seemed "realistic". This was insane, moaned the whiskered oaf, since blah-blah torque blah-blah aerodynamics blah-blah-blah wheel trim blah-blah-blah-blah-blah. He then demanded a free copy of the magazine, before shuffling away to go over his collection of belly button fluff, or whatever it is these angry loners do in their spare time.

"Even a head-on collision at 200 mph feels strangely unsatisfying. After Carmageddon, these things matter."

Doesn't look like Doncaster to me. Must've taken a wrong turning at Albuquerque. Thank God.

If he's reading this now, he'll doubtless be thinking that my personal lack of motoring qualifications should exempt me from passing judgement on *Test Drive IV* – he's probably even preparing a heated e-mail to the Editor this very minute. To which I say: why don't you just stop whining, put this magazine down for a moment, and then gouge both your eyes out with your own thumbs, you meaningless, soap-dodging dunce?

You make me feel so wheel

Test Drive IV is a boy racer's swerve 'em up which adheres closely to the proven *Need For Speed* formula: hand the player a set of keys and insurance documents for some of the flashiest cars in existence, then set him (it's always a

Chequered frag

So, *Test Drive IV* is somewhat lacking in excitement, eh? Well, if you fancy buying it, perhaps you'd like to try out some of the following imaginary scenarios in order to spice things up a tad. Simply pretend that one of the following things is happening while you play, and voilà – edge-of-the-seat entertainment is yours...

- Your pregnant wife is in the back seat, moaning and groaning and about to give birth at any second. You're on the way to the hospital. Problem is, so are the other competitors – and there's only one free bed. The race, as they say, is on.
- You are Vanessa Feltz, and you're hosting an afternoon dinner party for Dale Winton, Robert Kilroy-Silk, Cheryl Baker and the late Russell Harty. During the final preparations, you are horrified to discover that you're all out of cocktail sticks for the cheese nibbles. The guests are due to arrive in ten minutes. Without a moment to lose, you leap behind the wheel of your Jaguar XJ-220, determined to make it to the shops and back in time – even if you die in the attempt.

him) loose in a series of exotic locations – namely San Francisco, Washington, Kyoto, Bern, Munich and Keswick. Yes, Keswick – that world-famous Lake District tourist haven. No kidding – it's here. If you live in or around Keswick, this fact alone surely justifies the asking price *(Well, it might if it actually looked like Keswick – Tourism Ed)*. Hopefully, it also marks the beginning of a new trend, and before long all our games will be overflowing with references to spiritless British locations. Coming soon: *The Doncaster Mysteries, Berinsfield Jetski Duellists* and the eagerly-awaited *Bomb Norwich*.

Each of the ten available cars is based on a real vehicle. Some are new (1998 Dodge Viper, anyone?), some are old (such as the 1971 Plymouth Hemi Cuda), and some are collectors' items (like the 1966 Shelby Cobra 427). They're all available with both manual and automatic transmission. They look lovely and everything, but really, if you genuinely get excited at the prospect of taking control of one of these beasts, your life is sadly lacking in flavour. I may not be able

A car sniffing another car's bottom.

to drive in real life, but I do know that there's a huge difference between hammering through a country lane in a brand new 1998 TVR Cerbera, and doing the same thing within the confines of a computer game. They could have called the cars anything they liked, and based the handling on anything from a Rover 213 to a Rover 213SE, and no one – including the previously mentioned beardy spod bloke – would have been any the wiser. Still, a little escapism never hurt anyone, eh? Well, not until it starts bordering on paranoid psychosis – but that's another story.

Un-brake my heart

The end result is a proficient high-speed racing game which somehow never really engages the player. It's hard to say exactly where the problem lies. The courses aren't wonderful: despite some wonderful roadside scenery, the tracks themselves are largely devoid of thrills. During the race, the police frequently give chase, but only in a half-hearted kind of a way. Invisible 'walls' prevent you from exploring much of the surrounding terrain, and there's a complete lack of vehicle damage, which means that even a head-on collision at 200 mph feels strangely unsatisfying. Post-*Carmageddon*, these things do matter, and to pretend otherwise is complete and utter idiocy.

The single most important factor in any car 'em up is the overall 'feel' of the handling; its ability to sustain the illusion that you really are in control of a genuine vehicle. And sadly, in this respect, *Test Drive IV* doesn't quite cut the mustard. It's just a tad too... well, clinical. Efficient, easy on the eye, technically impressive, and with plenty of content – *Test Drive IV* tries hard, but can't quite pull it off.

(Above left) Window shopping. In a car. (Main) There are lots of cars in this game. It's a game about cars. With cars in it.

In Perspective

Test Drive IV is the latest in a long line of PC racing games. If any one of them could be said to be its 'soulmate', it'd be *Need For Speed II*, although for our money it's a little better than that. *Screamer Rally* and *TOCA* both leave it standing, as does the ubiquitous *Carmageddon*.

Test Drive IV

Carmageddon

Screamer Rally

Toca: Touring Car Championship

Tech Specs

Memory: 16Mb
Processor: P90
Graphics: SVGA
Sound: All major sound cards
Controls: Keyboard, joystick
Note: 240Mb of free hard disk space required

Score

Like a tasty but toothless bowl of chilli.

69

Price: £39.99
Release date: Out now
Publisher: Electronic Arts
Telephone: 01753 549442
Website: www.ea.com

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Frogger

Patrick McCarthy wrote a whole page of humorous introductions based on frogs, tongues, French people and getting your fingers sticky. Unfortunately, they were so offensive we'd have been banned by every reputable newsagent there is.

YOU CAN HARDLY GO DOWN THE PUB these days without people going all misty-eyed and starting to bang on about the old days, when games were games because they had playability, even though they had all the visual appeal of Robin Cook lap-dancing. But one thing they always forget is that most of them, being made either by insane Japanese programmers or socially inept Western programmers who never go out, had huge failings in logic when applied to the real world.

Frogger is a prime example. You jump from one lane of traffic to another, avoiding cars, trucks, bulldozers and what have you. If one of them hits you, you suffer a severe case of ingrown toenails. And ingrown ribs, arms, legs and head. That's okay so far – all fairly logical. Then you leap onto rapidly moving floating logs to make your way across the river. We won't dwell on the fact that some logs are flowing in opposite directions to the others, at enormous speed. This is illogical, but it's nothing compared to the central oddity, which is that if you miss a log, you fall in and drown. You die. Despite the fact that you're supposed to be a frog. An amphibian who can swim. That's why you have large paddles sellotaped to the end of your legs. If you were a frog and, on your way to do a bit of froggie-style 'a-courting', you jumped into a river and drowned, you'd be more than a little disappointed that the process of evolution had let you down so badly. You'd probably ask for your money back. Especially if you'd missed out on a shag in the process.

Talking of disappointments

And talking of disappointments (he says, linking seamlessly), I was rather disappointed with this. When I wrote the Blueprint for it, I really thought it was going to be pretty good. Instead of just re-hashing the original to cash in on the retro trend, they've actually put some thought into it, keeping the hopping-about-against-a-time-limit element, but adding other factors and producing what amounts to a 3D platform game. But let's go back a step and tell you what you get.

"The idea is to jump on female frogs and 'save' them, just as most males are keen to 'save' Claudia Schiffer."

3Dfx cards are one thing, but *Frogger*'s '90s-style 3D graphics require a top-notch Pentium – and a wallet as capacious as an elephant's scrotum to pay for it.

What you get

As well as the original, 'classic' level with roads, river, traffic, crocs, snakes and so on, you also get many other variations. For example, there's a series of small islands that you navigate around by hopping on and off a series of moving logs that seem to have been based on the elevated railway in Sydney – they travel about in circles, but they don't actually go anywhere. In another level, you have to hop your way through the inside of what appears to be a giant sanitary-towel burning plant. Fall off the rapidly revolving platforms into the smouldering murk at your peril. There's a split-level desert sequence in which you have to hitch a ride

Some neat twists on the original game seem to have been nicked from the likes of *Donkey Kong (Surely, 'a knowing homage to a great title' – Ed).*

on seagulls' backs and an underground zone in which you eat glow-worms to see what you're doing. There's even one that's been 'heavily influenced' by *Super Mario 64*, providing a trip through the clouds, hopping onto balloons which either plummet like they're being piloted by Richard Branson, or rise like male patients' sheets in *Carry On Nurse*. And so on, and so on.

There are some nice ideas, too. As in the original game, the plan is to jump on top of female frogs and 'save' them (in much the same way that most males would be keen to 'save' Claudia Schiffer). To find out where they are on the level, you croak, and the nearest frog chickster croaks back, in a demonstration of the elaborate mating rituals usually only seen on wildlife documentaries and outside nightclubs on the Old Kent Road. Off you head, depending on which direction the croak comes from. (Obviously, it helps to have your speakers wired up the right way round, or you may find yourself trying to shag a scarab beetle. And if you've seen the size of their pincers, you won't fancy trying that unless you're into Operation Spanner-type activities.) The other nice idea is that you have a tongue of such length and usability that, if you had one in real life, you'd be beating 'bords' away with a baseball bat. You use this to eat flies. There's another joke in there somewhere. But back to the disappointments.

Blinking flip

The problem lies not with the levels, but with the way the game works. One niggle lies with the view. Considering the size and complexity of some levels, the view's slightly too close to the action – yes, there's a map; yes, you can revolve the angle at which you observe proceedings (although this can create more problems than it's worth when you try to do so at speed and combine it with movement); and yes, it zooms in and out automatically at certain points. But even with all this, you generally still feel you need a much wider field of view.

But the main problem with *Frogger* is 'Intermittent I've-Been-Robbed Syndrome'. There's nothing worse in a platform game than being absolutely convinced that you landed on a particular platform, only to see yourself plunge to your doom. This happened on a couple of the levels – and I know it's not just me, because I played the game in super-slo-mo to check. I did this by playing it on a P166 without a 3Dfx card – it was like watching a tortoise taking a nap. And there was froggie, leaping onto the platform, dead centre – and next frame there he was, dead, with the platform further on. The scrolling's a bit crap, basically, even on a P90 3Dfx-equipped machine. I know we're all supposed to have 3D accelerated P233s these days, but most of us haven't and upgrading is a lot of expense to go to for a platform game. And even if you do have the gear, there are still the other little problems to contend with. Ah, well.

(Above) Er... this looks familiar. *Frogger* reproduces levels from the original arcader. (Above right) Invite some fellow wrinkly gamers round for an evening of 'I remember when...' video gaming nostalgia courtesy of *Frogger*'s multi-player mode.

In Perspective

As old arcade game reworkings go, *Frogger*'s a nice idea, and it could have been very good if it worked properly – but it doesn't. Worse, it really requires a top-spec, 3D accelerated PC to get a decent lick of speed out of it. At least *Robotron X* doesn't let you down in collision detection. Still, it's miles better than playing on the Westway.

Frogger

Robotron X

Playing on the Westway

Tech Specs

Memory: 16Mb

Processor: P100

Graphics: SVGA

Sound: Windows 95-compatible sound cards

Controls: Keyboard, mouse

Score

It could have been pretty good. Instead, it's rather disappointing.

68

Price: £39.99

Release date: Out now

Publisher: Hasbro Interactive

Telephone: 0181 569 1234

Website: www.hasbrointeractive.com

dan Personal Computers The People's Choice

Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee

PC ZONE Recommended

Paul Mallinson is odd, damn odd. He plays role-playing games in his boxer shorts. Or so the rumour goes.

RUPTURE FARMS - THE LARGEST, MOST productive meat processing plant in the entire galaxy - is not the place to be if you're a veggie. Which the hero of this game, Abe, most certainly is not. Abe is a Mudokan, a race of green-skinned aliens that have been enslaved by the evil Glukkon to work inside their ghoulish slaughterhouse. He's also a fully fledged meat-eater, having tasted Meech Munchies (sadly discontinued due to the extinction of the Meech), chomped on Paramite Pies (mmmm) and occasionally tucked into Scrab Cakes.

With Scrab stocks plummeting and Paramites on their way out too, Rupture Farms are on the lookout for a tasty alternative, and – as Abe inadvertently finds out – Mudokan meat is next in line for 'processing'. Cue much bother as Abe makes good his escape, with the evil ruling Glukkon and their sinister army of robotic guards hot on his heels.

(Right) Just one example of *Oddworld*'s dark humour. Tip: rescue your Mudokan friends and make it easier for yourself later in the game.

Comedy arse gas

When the excellent opening video subsides, control of Abe reverts to the player and the game moves seamlessly to a familiar side-on platform format. It's here Abe's problems really begin.

Trapped inside a labyrinth of machinery and monsters, Abe must lead his Mudokan co-workers to safety through the power of his own voice. Gamespeak, as Abe's in-game vocal repertoire is known, is activated by hitting various keys on the numeric pad (if you're playing with keys, that is) and can be useful in a number of situations. The phrases 'hello', 'follow me' and 'wait' are self-explanatory and come in handy very early on in the game, but growls, whistles and the occasional fart (complete with comedy arse gas) serve their purpose later on when Abe escapes the confines of Rupture

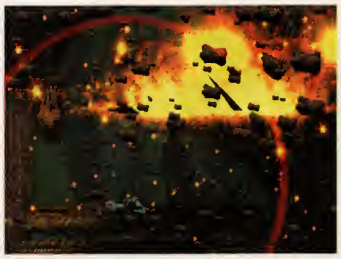
> **"Oddworld *is inhabited by some of the most disgustingly hostile creatures ever seen in a computer game.*"**

Paramites and Scrabs: eat 'em or worship 'em?

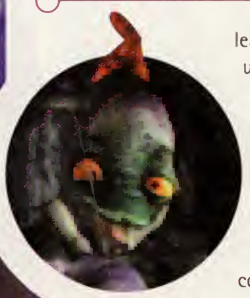
The whole story revolves around these ugly critters. Although you're trying to help them (they're sacred creatures apparently), they won't pause for one second before tearing your head off.

The Paramite is a hideous but intelligent pack animal that will eat you alive given half a chance. In groups they are lethal.

The *Oddworld* equivalent of the T1000, Scrabs are fearless beasts with a ravenous thirst for Mudokan blood. After they kill you they will dance on your grave.



(Left) "There's nothing like a good pie!" (Issued by the British Pie Association.) (Above) Instructions on how to mount Abe's Elum. Oo-er sounds a bit rude! (Above right) Abe's friends didn't expect his 'fart lighting' routine to be this explosive.



(Above) Two Scrabs fighting is a joy to behold (and useful in many circumstances), but three Scrabs fighting is worth a bet at the bookies. Just keep out of their way.

Farms. There's also a multi-faceted 'chant' which does everything from ring bells to take over the body of an enemy (très cool). It's all very cute and will no doubt have the girlies cooing in the background as you play.

However, little else in this platform adventure could be described as cute. *Oddworld* is inhabited by some of the most disgustingly hostile creatures ever seen in a computer game, all of whom will tear Abe's head off given half a chance. There is help pretty much the entire way through the game, although progress does seem to rely on trial and error, which involves much replaying of levels and gnashing of teeth. All this can be frustrating at times, especially when Abe is plonked right back at the start of a level when he dies. But fortunately Abe is an agile creature and if you spend time learning how to control him there's plenty of magic to uncover throughout the game.

Looks the business

The developers have created an outstanding visual environment for Abe to leap around in. Gigantic buildings and grandiose statues work well to put across that 'discovering a lost civilisation' feeling. They've also made good use of depth and movement – check out the cool speed blur for aesthetic attention to detail.

The shroud of darkness enveloping many of *Oddworld*'s gigantic levels is inspiringly atmospheric – and having to use that darkness by dodging in and out of shadows to avoid the enemy is even more inspiring. Some in-game situations can be very tense, as well as quite chilling, at times.

There are buckets of brilliant touches, from the hugely comical and violent explosions, to the point in the game where you get to ride an Elum, a docile mode of transport and constant source of fun. The whole game is impeccably presented. Even though much of it is shown in only two dimensions it never looks dated. The music is spot on, the animation second to none and for a change the pre-rendered movie sequences actually add to the overall experience. In short: *Abe's Oddysee* looks and sounds bloody brilliant.

Put those hours in

What prospective buyers should watch out for, though, is the level of commitment this game requires. *It is hard.* It can hurt you. Psychologically. You have to be prepared to put the hours in – especially later in the game – as well as be ready to compensate for a few of the game's misgivings. The slowdown – particularly when Abe enters a new room – does invoke the odd bit of panic (a dog's bollocks system may help, although the game still 'reared' on our office P200), and the lack of a proper save system may be a little too much for some ("back to the start?! You f*****g b*****d! You b*****d!" will become a bit of a catchphrase for some people), but if you can handle these problems then *Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee* is an interesting enough game to warrant your attention.

(Above) *Abe's Oddysee* is a game of grandiose graphical splendour – mixing Giger-esque organics and Aardman-style animation with a Terry Gilliam-like attention to detail on a Cecil B De Mille scale. (Above right) Probably the hardest part of the whole game: lighting eight well-guarded flint torches in the Scrabanian Temple. Six down – only two more to go...

In Perspective

Oddworld probably wouldn't exist if it weren't for the likes of *Flashback*, but it has brought the genre forward with a decent '90s re-mix of an '80s style of gameplay. It also muscles in on *Ecstatica I* and *II* territory by creating a versatile and believable gaming environment to explore and play around in. Oh, and *Abe's Oddysee* does have platforms to leap around on. Which is where comparisons to *Rayman* end.

Abe's Oddysee

Flashback

Ecstatica II

Rayman

Tech Specs

Memory: 16Mb
Processor: P133
Graphics: SVGA
Sound: All major sound cards
Controls: Keyboard, gamepad

Score

Engrossing, inventive and very challenging.

81

Price: £39.99
Release date: Out now
Publisher: GT Interactive
Telephone: 0171 258 3791
Website: www.oddworld.com

dan Personal Computers The People's Choice

I-War

PC ZONE Recommended

Two centuries of endless conflict. Two centuries in which the Commonwealth has failed to bring justice to a troubled world. Jamie Cunningham sees if he can get away with copying more stuff from the back of the box.

One of the first missions you'll be faced with is to scoop up lots of junk. This is the huge tug that transports your salvage craft. Handy that really.

AS A KID I WANTED TO BE A SPACEMAN. I had Darth Vader on my duvet, pop-up books of the Apollo missions, a much cherished model of a Space 1999 Eagle and a life-size *Alien* poster that terrorised me every night for a month before I took it down and stuck it in the loft. But then I remember watching this documentary about astronauts and everything changed. Far from launching themselves bravely into the unknown, they spent fifteen years hanging upside-down in centrifuge simulators feeling motion sick. Even the ones lucky enough to take off were forced to wear Michelin man costumes and sit wedged in a capsule no bigger than an airing cupboard. And how did they take a dump?

A lesson in physics

Having played *I-War*, my childhood desire for weightlessness is back. Here's a game that allows you to sit in the captain's seat of a Commonwealth Navy dreadnought and experience Newtonian motion in space without the desire to laugh up your lunch. It's quite impossible to describe exactly how the craft responds so beautifully to tugs on the joystick, or how it manages to be so uncompromisingly realistic; the bottom line is that it feels just right.

To get things moving, tickle the set-speed indicator and the throttles will kick in to thrust you forward. Pull back on the yolk when you're hurtling along and the ship arcs gently round, boosters on the craft's underbelly wrestling noisily with the new heading. Swing full circle at maximum speed and you can almost feel your stomach fighting to get out of your butt.

Very interesting. Where's the fun?

Tacked on to a superb game engine are a splendid series of missions that link together and require hard thinking, imagination, and an ability to scrag the bad guys – an unruly bunch of fruitcakes who oppose the Commonwealth and spend most of their time stealing its ships. But combat is tricky and although you improve over time, it doesn't have the same immediate appeal of, say, *X-Wing Vs TIE Fighter*. Even the 'Instant Action' mission sees you dead in a matter of minutes, and where's the fun in that? A difficulty setting would help, but there isn't one.

Combat gripes aside, *I-War* remains a decent space adventure. It makes a mockery of the way rival titles play, and can be recommended as a worthwhile addition to the library of any genre fan for the fabulous CGI intro sequence alone.

(Above right) The briefing console. Not wonderfully exciting, but necessary. (Above left) Interstellar dogfights are fast and furious but can be too much like hard work. (Above centre) Not quite as roomy as the new Mercedes E Class.

In Perspective

Unlike the less brainy competition, *I-War* has a sexy PhD in Physics. To some people around the galaxy this alone would be alluring enough, but the terrific missions and depth of play should encourage everyone else. Combat does take a lot of practice, though. That said, it's worth mastering as the result pays dividends.

I-War

Privateer 2: The Darkening

X-Wing Vs TIE Fighter

Elite 2 Frontier

Being on the Mir space station

Being on the Mir space station and feeling homesick

Tech Specs

Memory: 16Mb
Processor: P90 recommended
Graphics: SVGA
Sound: All major sound cards
Controls: Mouse, joystick, keyboard

Win 95 Only!

Score

Newton would be proud.

86

Price: £39.99
Release date: Out now
Publisher: Ocean/Particle systems
Telephone: 0161 832 6633
Website: www.particle-systems.com

dan Personal Computers The People's Choice

FROM THE MAKERS OF SCREAMER AND SCREAMER2 COMES THE

TOUGHEST TIGHTEST MOST INTENSE RALLY DRIVE AROUND!

Screamer Rally is the racing game with edge. With 7 tracks that demand total concentration and 5 cars that require total respect, the best will once again be put to the test.

Feel every bone-shaking bump, every nerve-wracking jump, every mud and gut churning skid, twist and turn. But don't feel ashamed to release the tension with a scream every once in a while!

"A slick, challenging and different game. It really is top stuff." - PC ZONE

"An exhilarating arcade racing game that looks gorgeous and is great fun to play." - ULTIMATE PC

"All in all, it's a fast-paced, hugely satisfying rally game." - PC GAMER

Screamer RALLY

FEATURES STUNNING 3D ACCELERATED GRAPHICS

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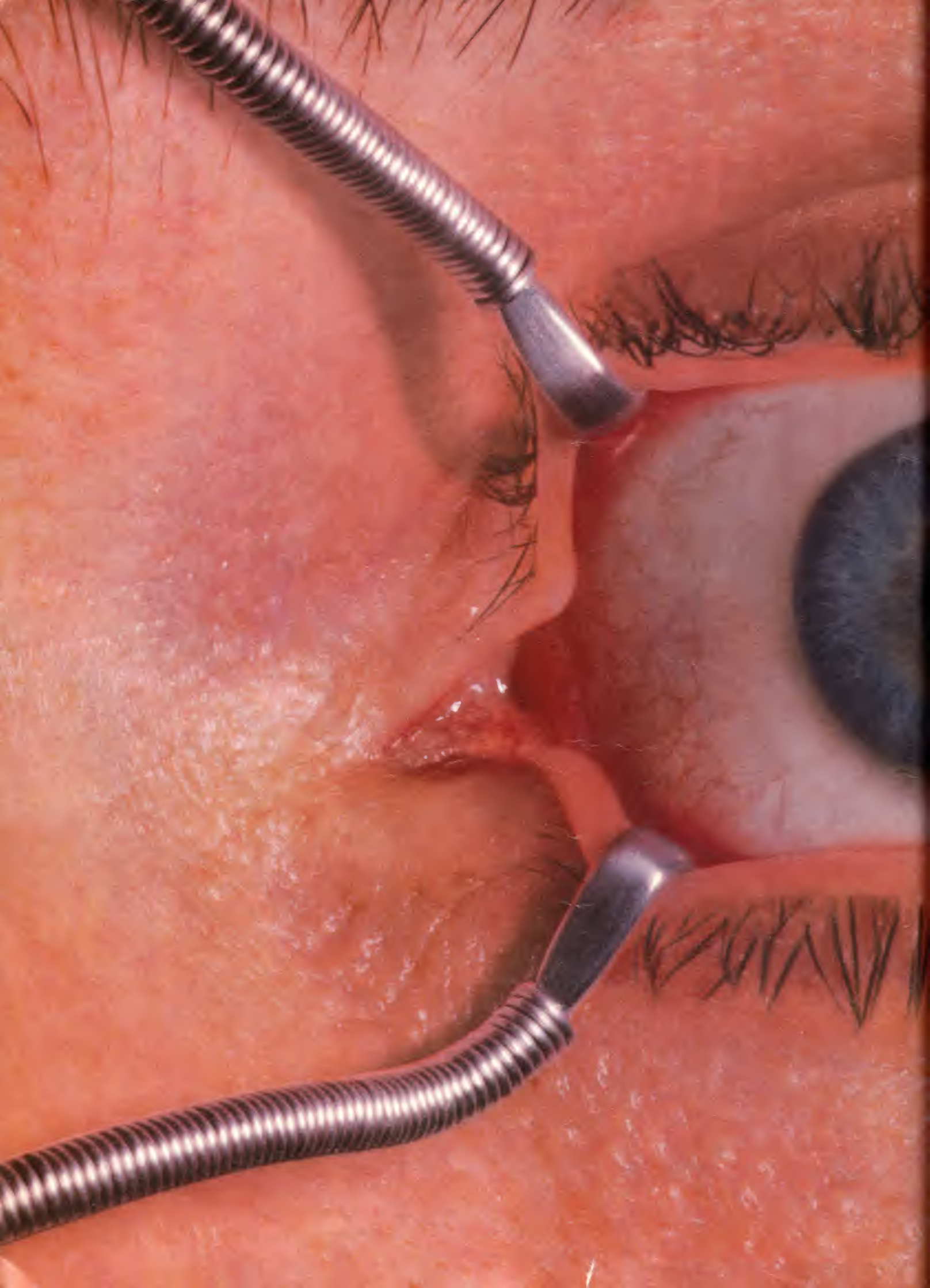

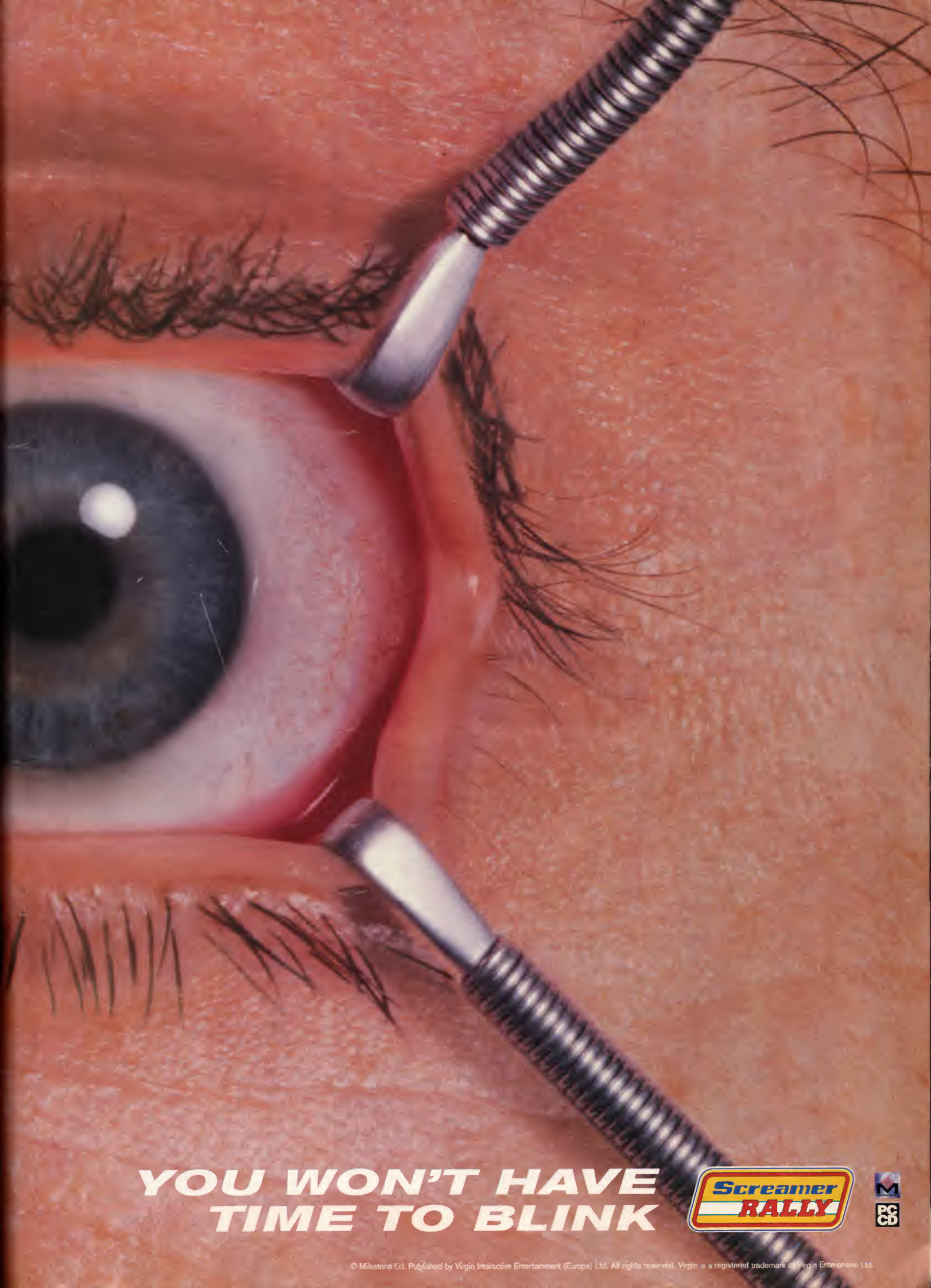

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Flight Unlimited II

PC ZONE Recommended

Without a thought for his own safety, *PC Zone*'s very own fearless flyer Paul Presley taxis to the runway of review, activates the engine and prepares to engage the full throttle of criticism.

AFTER READING ALL THE BLURB ABOUT how 'real' *Flight Unlimited II* is and how it's amazingly detailed and accurate and how you can use it to learn to fly for real, I guess the basic question has to be: why would anyone want to buy a flight sim that doesn't have guns? I mean, just how much enjoyment is there to be had from patiently flying along predefined commercial routes? From carefully ensuring you don't deviate from established aviation protocol in the slightest? From steadfastly taxiing around busy airports, waiting for clearance so that you can take a short hop from one part of San Francisco Bay to, er, a slightly different part of San Francisco Bay? How many times can you say, "Sod it, I'm going for it" and fly under the Golden Gate Bridge before it becomes just a part of your routine daily existence, like shopping for milk and masturbating to *Baywatch? (Waaaay too much information – Ed)*

Taxiing is almost a game within itself. Follow the yellow line to find the runway but make sure you use the right taxiways, or the Air Traffic Controller will shout at you.

"Almost every flight degenerates into seeing just how much I can piss off the air traffic controllers."

Come in number 7, your time's up

Let's be excruciatingly honest about things here. This is a truly anal game – but then that's true of all 'real-life' flight sims. There's nothing sexy or cool about flying a Cessna from one airport to another – it's not like strapping on a pair of Ray-Bans, jumping into the latest in killer jets and screaming off to give this month's Harry Hun substitute a good bombing before flying home, buzzing the tower and getting off with the base's sexy psychiatrist. The real world is dull – deathly so. That's why we play games to get away from it. The only way to derive pleasure from this sort of thing is by being the kind of person for whom 'routine' and 'procedure' gets you hot and keeps you simmering.

Which, rather annoyingly, doesn't really explain why I like *Flight Unlimited II (Actually I think it might – Ed).* I have to confess that after an admittedly shaky start which had me questioning everything from why games like this even exist to what my role in this dark and lonely universe is (you get a lot of time to think during trips from Rio Vista to Palo Alto), I found myself getting into the whole routine of it. I actually rather enjoyed the concept of manually tuning in my radio to different frequencies to pick up different airfield broadcasts. I warmed to the idea of just taking the old bird up for a quick spin, so to speak.

The gameplay options help to vary things. Missions, as it were, include all sorts of interesting situations. Everything it seems is on offer, from picking up a pair of escaped prisoners from Alcatraz under cover of night to dropping a load of frozen turkeys over a football stadium to surviving in all sorts of adverse weather conditions and engine failures.

(Top left) Being a 'proper' flight sim, you have to set up your flight plan ahead of each journey. Well, you don't have to – you can throw caution to the wind, take to the air and fly in random directions until you hit something. (Above) Each grade of airport (international, local, airstrip, etc.) has its own illustration, filled to the brim with girlish glee... er, hot spots to set up your flight.

Going Dutch

I don't want to kid anyone here. *Flight Unlimited II* is hardly the most technically proficient flight sim ever made – at least cosmetically. I'm sure the flight dynamics are accurate to the fifteenth decimal point (more so, probably) – it's the visual dynamics I'm referring to. Remember Interactive Magic's *iF-22*? How their use of photo-realistic graphics meant that when flying above 5000ft everything looked superb, but flying at anything lower meant the scenery looked like your gran had knitted it? It's a similar story here. Things aren't actually that bad at low heights, at least not with a 3Dfx card (which I would highly recommend), but it doesn't really compare to the visual excellence of something like *F-22 Advanced Defence Fighter*.

And I can't help but feel that the landscape looks a bit empty. There are the occasional 'points of interest' to explore, but other than a few skyscrapers, large city areas are represented by flat texture maps, so there's no real feeling of flying over anywhere really populated. It just doesn't *feel* real, and consequently damages the real-life atmosphere that a sim of this nature desperately needs to create. This didn't matter too much in the aerobatics-oriented *Flight Unlimited*, where you're only interested in a bit of up-diddly-upping and down-diddly-downing, but with the sequel, it's a killer.

Eidos' response to this would probably be something like: 'It isn't physically possible to simulate *every* building in an entire city on today's machines. You'd have frame rates of one per week!' My answer to this is that if something's worth doing, it's worth doing properly. Most of the other available flight sims manage it, so why not *Flight Unlimited II*? Whatever the reasons may be, the fact remains that what we're left with doesn't feel right and suffers as a result.

Flight Limited

Technical hang-ups aside, the bottom line is that *Flight Unlimited II* does retain a certain appeal. It's a specialist simulation, make no mistake about it, but it's one that has a fair amount of addictive appeal to it. It isn't nearly as deep or varied as Microsoft's *Flight Simulator '98* and the lack of any kind of expansion into other cities or multi-player options is rather annoying. But that said, there's still an underlying playability that makes it all seem worthwhile.

I can see *Flight Unlimited II*'s limitations. Despite frequent urges to just turn it on and have a quick buzz around, almost every flight tends to degenerate quickly into seeing how much I can piss off the air traffic controllers, how many bridges I can fly under, how many hangars I can fly through and how quickly I can turn my plane into a mangled pile of steaming metal, the likes of which haven't been seen since the last Paris airshow. Rather amusingly, I once managed to get my speed up to the 600 knots mark, at which point the sheer force of the air pressure ripped my wings clean off and out of the sky I fell.

But the urge remains. I'd like to have been able to take *Flight Unlimited II* more seriously, but once again we're in the world of Unfriendly To Novices. The in-game lessons attempt to cover all the aspects of civil aviation, but don't really explain things in sufficient step-by-step detail to leave you feeling really comfortable – some sort of flying instructor sitting alongside you guiding you through each stage would have been a nice idea. Given time though, I reckon I could master everything. At least I can get the thing up in the air, which is good, and once there I've got a fair idea of what to do to keep it there.

So *Flight Unlimited II* is worthwhile. Maybe not if you've already got Microsoft's title, and definitely not if you're deep into the world of guns and bombs, strafing and barrel rolls. But as a time-waster, a novelty item or an office toy, it does the job and it does it well.

Surprisingly, there wasn't a lot of call for civil pilots following the nuclear winter, but somehow Jake managed to make a living.

In Perspective

The world of civil aviation sims is pretty much a two horsepower race. It probably comes as no surprise that Microsoft are leading the field with their *Flight Sim '98*, a globe-trotting extravaganza that even lets you fly jets, airliners and helicopters. *Flight Unlimited II* can't really compete on those grounds, but it scores by being more detailed in its smaller area, and much more fun.

Flight Unlimited II

Flight Simulator '98

Flying for real

Tech Specs

Memory: 16Mb
Processor: P120
Graphics: SVGA
Sound: All major sound cards
Controls: Joystick, mouse, keyboard, flightstick, rudders

Score

Limited, but fun nonetheless.

84

Price: £39.99
Release date: January 98
Publisher: Eidos Interactive
Telephone: 0181 636 3000
Website: www.eidosinteractive.com

dan Personal Computers The People's Choice

Seven Kingdoms

There just aren't enough real-time strategy games around these days, says Chris Anderson. Yeah, right.

IT'S TRUE THOUGH, ISN'T IT? THERE'S hardly an issue of *Zone* goes by without a review or preview of a real-time strategy game. This can mean one of two things: either this is such a popular genre that publishers can make as many of these games as they like, safe in the knowledge that gamers will snap them up with relish, or the constant appearance of the things is down to a long-standing attempt to cash in as much as possible on the continued success of *C&C: Red Alert* and its add-on offspring.

Whatever the case, *Seven Kingdoms* is the latest arrival. We'd love to say at this point that it breaks new ground and represents a real step forward for the genre, but there wouldn't be any point – we know that you always look at the score first, so you'd know we'd be lying through our teeth.

That's not to say there's anything particularly wrong with it, it's perfectly playable and all that but... tell you what, it's better explained with a blow-by-blow account of what happened from the time the game came in for review to the time the score was decided upon.

"Make more forts to train more soldiers to go off and beat the crap out of everything. Sound familiar?"

Who wants?

Three games come in for review: *Seven Kingdoms*, *Uprising* and *Human Onslaught* (*Warwind 2*). I argue with Charlie over who reviews what. We stare at the screenshots on the backs of the boxes and Charlie says, "I'll have *Uprising*." "Why?" I ask. "It just looks better, I'll have this one," he says, and runs off before I can stop him. Charlie obviously reached the same conclusion as me when he looked at the screenshots. *Uprising* looks like it's a unique take on the genre, whereas the other two look like, well, two real-time strategy games. Shit, that

(Left) Send your spies (brave heroes risking life and limb) to infiltrate enemy buildings while avoiding your opponents' spies (filthy weasels fighting a foul underhand campaign). (Right) All the diplomatic options you'd expect are present and correct.

Question: Are inter-kingdom trade and diplomacy and market micro-economics more exciting than Microsoft Excel (or *CM2* for that matter)? Discuss.

means I've got to review two of the things in one weekend. Oh well, who knows, one of them might surprise me the same way *Total Annihilation* surprised just about everybody by doing the same things as all the other *C&C* wannabes, but doing it a hell of a lot better. I take them home. First up, *Seven Kingdoms*. I load it up, get confused, stare at the manual for a bit, become unconfused, and get into the game proper. It seems alright. Four hours later it seems more than alright (probably because by now I know what I'm doing). It lulls me into a false sense of security. I think I'm having fun: building, spying, fighting – you know the kind of thing. Another two hours down the line, I've more or less had enough. I suddenly realise that it has nothing I haven't seen before in the multitude of real-time games I've ploughed through over the last year. Like I said, there's nothing particularly wrong with it, but in some ways that's the biggest irritation of all – I'd rather play it for an hour, realise it's total shite, and duly give it a royal slagging.

I've probably put you off the game completely by now. Er, I didn't really mean to do that, because there *are* a lot of people out there who will want to buy this game. To determine whether or not you're one of them, please follow me to the next paragraph.

Question time

Answer true or false to the following statements:

1. I love real-time strategy games and can't get enough of them. In fact, I'd probably die of a broken heart if there wasn't at least one of them released every month.
2. I love computer games, but I'm completely skint. If someone gave me a new game to play I'd play it to death no matter what it was.
3. I'm new to the genre. I've somehow completely missed the five million real-time strategy games already released, despite the fact they've been plastered all over *PC Zone* for the last year or two.
4. I don't ask much from life. I'm impressed by just about anything really. I even had lots of fun with Microsoft Excel, despite the poor graphics and lack of sound support.

If you answered 'true' to any of these statements, you'll get along just fine with *Seven Kingdoms*. In which case you'll be wanting to know a bit more about it, I suppose.

Game on

As the game's title implies, there are seven kingdoms in the game. Which means there's also seven kings – and you're one of them. Your city is home to many loyal peasants who can be trained to do your bidding in different ways. Train miners, send them into mines and you'll get coal, clay and iron. Train scientists and they'll research new weapons. Constructors make new buildings. Make a fort and your soldiers will be trained by a general or a king. Construct a market, buy a camel and trade with friendly kingdoms to make more cash. Make more forts, train more soldiers, and send them all off to beat the crap out of everything that gets in their way. Is this all beginning to sound a bit familiar? Quelle surprise. To be fair, *Seven Kingdoms* isn't the worst example of the genre you'll ever come across, but it's a long way behind the leaders (*Total Annihilation, WarCraft 2, Red Alert* etc). Maybe I'll have more luck with *Human Onslaught*. Join me on page 90 to find out...

Last night I thought I'd died and gone to *WarCraft* heaven. And lo, there was much rejoicing. Then I woke up and found I was still playing *Seven Kingdoms*. Bummer.

In Perspective

There are so many excellent games in the real-time strategy zone already. *Total Annihilation* brought the genre back to life big-time – so did *Age Of Empires*. *Command & Conquer: Red Alert* is obviously the classic, and *WarCraft 2* remains as playable now as it did when it first came out. Sadly, *Seven Kingdoms* looks distinctly average when compared to *any* of these titles, offering nothing you won't see elsewhere.

Seven Kingdoms

Total Annihilation

Age Of Empires

C&C: Red Alert

WarCraft 2

Tech Specs

Memory: 16Mb
Processor: P90
Graphics: SVGA
Sound: All major sound cards
Controls: Mouse

Score

Fairly playable but we've seen it all before.

68

Price: £39.99
Release date: Out now
Publisher: Interactive Magic
Telephone: 01344 409399
Website: www.imagicgames.co.uk

dan Personal Computers The People's Choice

F-22 Raptor

Dave Mathieson has often been compared to a rugged airforce pilot – a cool-headed loner who answers only to his gut instincts. Well, he never does what his mum tells him, anyway. Here he is then, reviewing a game.

A bit of meat on the bone

F-22 Raptor has three main gameplay modes – quick missions, campaigns and multi-player. The quick missions let you get straight into the air with the minimum of faffing around, and the first few take the form of training missions, teaching you about the various cockpit displays and weapons systems on board the F-22. These have been very sensibly designed, and the briefing for each mission tells you which keys will come in handy, which cuts down on all that tiresome trawling through the manual malarkey. Once you're in the cockpit, a nice man gives you all manner of handy hints and basically tells you what you're supposed to be doing.

"The various cut-scenes that occur during the campaigns are very nicely done, and provide lots of atmosphere."

NEVER SINCE *F-29 RETALIATOR* CAME OUT on the Amiga, big posh futuristic planes have been popular subject matter for flight sims. Current planes appeal to buffs who are obsessed with realism – mostly because they roar at twice the speed of sound and can take out seven MiGs at a time. They're also great fun. Then there's the fact that squillions of dollars are spent on military hardware, giving designers the opportunity to deliver plenty of realistic hi-tech action. Hoorah!

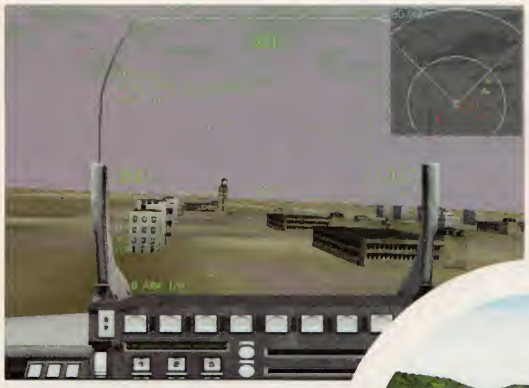
The Lockheed Martin F-22 Raptor is Uncle Sam's latest baby, combining speed, stealth and state-of-the-art avionics in one big plane. Designed to replace the F-15, the F-22 can cruise at supersonic speeds, it's virtually undetectable to most radars and is manoeuvrable as buggery, thanks to its vectored-thrust engines. This impressive list of features explains why the F-22 is the subject of many sims at the moment, the latest being NovaLogic's *F-22 Raptor*.

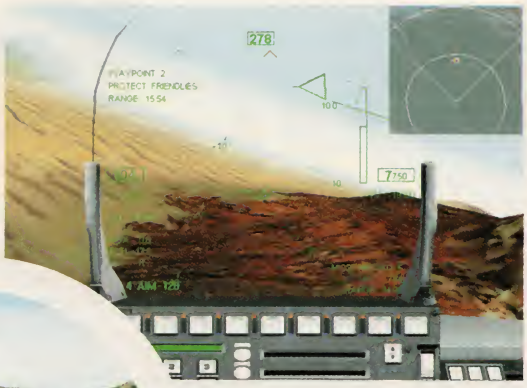
NovaLogic have quite a history of making hi-tech sims. In recent years they've based them around helicopters (the *Comanche* series), around tanks (*Armored Fist*) and F-22s (*Lightning II*). *F-22 Raptor* has been developed with close co-operation from Lockheed Martin, and it boasts reworked graphics, a new campaign structure and (it's claimed) improved flight modelling and realism.

(Top) Oooh! Look at that lovely sunset. Or is it a sunrise? It's nice, anyway. (Above) The planes have realistic markings and camouflage, although this MiG's stripes aren't exactly subtle.

The missions themselves start with simply flying around, and proceed onto using the different missiles and bombs, finally finishing with more realistic combat situations. Once you've mastered these, you can try your hand at the campaign mode, the real meat of the game. The first such mission is set in Angola, where you're involved in a peacekeeping role, sorting out the baddies and generally being a nice bloke. The various cut-scenes that occur during the campaigns are very nicely done, and provide lots of atmosphere. Once you've completed each one, you move onto the next. The rest of the scenarios are set in Jordan, Russia, Columbia and Iran.

Of course, the single most important aspect of any flight sim is the in-game graphics, and those in *F-22 Raptor* aren't bad – but they're not great either. The scenery's pretty good, with nicely texture-mapped mountains and forests, and distant mountains that fade in convincingly, rather than





(Top right) The Iran tourist ministry will have to work harder on their theme parks to get visitors. (Above) If you concentrate hard enough, there's definitely a sign for a Little Chef and their All Day Breakfast.

appearing out of nowhere as is the case in some sims. There's commendable detail on the planes, which have realistic-looking paint jobs and markings. There's also a good set of views, with the obligatory external views of your plane, enemy aircraft and missiles, and a decent virtual cockpit that can be smoothly panned around.

A slug skiing on salt

The usual penalty for good graphics is a crap frame rate, and while *F-22 Raptor* was perfectly playable on a medium detail setting on a P200MMX (the spec recommended for optimum performance), it wasn't exactly smoothsville either. This isn't helped by the lack of support for 3D accelerator cards. While most people still don't have a 3Dfx card, you only have to see games like *Longbow 2*, *EF2000* and *Flying Corps* running with one to realise that they can make a huge difference to the frame rate and the general image quality. *F-22 Raptor* suffers in this latter aspect as well, as the lack of hardware filtering makes everything look a bit rough around the edges. Having said all this, if you don't have a 3D card and you've got a fast PC, *F-22 Raptor*'s graphics are sufficiently decent.

The flight model in *F-22 Raptor* seems reasonable, which, given the amount of technology on board, means that the real thing is probably quite easy to fly. Unfortunately, the gameplay feels a bit simplistic, and while there are plenty of different instruments, you're mostly limited to just looking at them – there's none of the serious fiddling about that's necessary to complete missions successfully in *EF2000*. While the real F-22 has obviously been designed to be as easy to use as possible, it seems unlikely that it's only got one radar mode, and only one way of using the autopilot, for example. While these would be fine in 90 per cent of cases, I'd have thought that real combat situations would need a bit more flexibility than this. The weapons on offer are also limited to two air-to-air missiles, guns and one type of bomb. Again, surely the F-22 isn't like this in real life?

F-22 Raptor also loses out in the realism stakes where the campaigns are concerned. There are plenty of missions, and your performance affects subsequent operations, but there's no real mission planning, and although you can move waypoints, you can't add more, or send different flights to bomb other targets, for example. Still, the campaigns are good enough to provide a sense of continuity and keep you coming back for more.

While the overall simplicity of *F-22 Raptor* makes it easy to get into the air and start blowing things up, it also makes it less of a sim and a bit more of a game. While this might appeal to some, it also means that its long-term appeal is rather limited, and once you've completed the campaigns it's unlikely that you'll come back to it again. Still, if the existing graphics are given a much-needed boost with a 3D card patch, *F-22 Raptor* could certainly be one of the better looking flight sims around.

(Top left) After a hard day's flying there's nothing better than a nice shower. (Above left) There are lots of different planes featured in the game, and these B1 bombers are particularly exciting. (Above right) The scenery in *F-22 Raptor* has plenty of diversity, ranging from jungle valleys to deserts.

In Perspective

In terms of realism *F-22 Raptor* loses out to *EF2000* in a majorly big way – even more so when compared to the 3D accelerated version. Similarly, *JetFighter III*'s hardware acceleration makes it a better arcade sim. When you add these criticisms together, it's clear why *F-22 Raptor* isn't a scorching hit.

F-22 Raptor

EF2000

JetFighter III

F-22 ADF

Tech Specs

Memory: 16Mb
Processor: P90
Graphics: SVGA
Sound: All major sound cards
Controls: Joystick, mouse, keyboard

Win 95 Only!
Network Play
Internet Play
MMX

Score

A hi-tech sim that's let down by a lack of realism and support for 3D cards.

79

Price: £39.99
Release date: Out now
Publisher: NovaLogic
Telephone: 0171 405 1777
Website: www.novalogic.com

dan Personal Computers The People's Choice

Warwind 2: Human Onslaught

PC ZONE Recommended

The more real-time strategy games you play, the more fun they get. Well, that's what we told Chris Anderson.

FAMILIARITY BREEDS CONTEMPT, OR SO they say. You would think then, that upon loading *Warwind 2: Human Onslaught* and finding that the controls and interface are exactly what you'd expect from a *C&C: Red Alert* clone, it could be considered one of the most contemptuous videogames ever. Surprisingly, this is not the case. There are so many things to do in this game that you'll be very grateful you can do all of them with a minimum of fuss. It's a bit like playing an extremely good *Quake* clone that has the good sense to use all the same keys players are used to playing with in *Quake* itself.

Full marks for the interface then, although whether you'll think the same of *Warwind 2*'s graphics is really a matter of taste. Forget the graphically-stunning explosions you see in games like *Total Annihilation*, or the sophisticated veneer of *Red Alert*. In graphic terms, we're talking functional with a capital 'F' – think of the stuff the Bitmap Brothers were churning out before everyone discovered 3D (*Z* is a particularly good example). In fact, this game wouldn't look entirely out of place on the Amiga.

But being the dedicated gaming funsters that we are, we're not interested in the graphics, are we? Of course not. As gaming connoisseurs we want to know what the gameplay is like, and whether or not we're going to be burning the midnight oil as a result of *Warwind 2*'s addictive charms. Let's get on to that then.

Look out, Blizzard

Look out Blizzard indeed, because *Starcraft*'s biggest selling point at the moment appears to be the fact that you get to take control of four different races and play a whole campaign with each one. Funny that, because Mindscape have taken exactly the same approach with *Warwind 2* – and very well it works too.

Each of the races has its own totally unique soldiers, vehicles and buildings, and the campaigns are genuinely different depending on which race you choose to play. It's a bit like having four completely different games in one, which is what I think I said about *Starcraft* when I previewed it a few months back. Oh, alright then, I'll come clean and admit to being supremely confident that *Starcraft* will blow this thing out of the water when it comes out in a couple of months. But if you can't wait that long, you could do a lot worse than spending a couple of months with *Warwind 2*.

(Below) The Shama'Li get their knickers in a twist over a few resources. (Bottom) See that bloke in the hood? He's a villager. Click on him to recruit him.

We're only human

The biggest difference between *Warwind 1* and the sequel is the addition of human units. Two of the races are made up entirely of humans, and to be honest, these are the ones you'll probably want to play with. It's somewhat easier to identify with humans than weird aliens – a fact which hasn't escaped the attention of Blizzard, who are including a human race in *Starcraft* for exactly this reason.

Gameplay is pretty much what you'd expect from a game of this type, but there are some very nice touches. For example, you can choose which of your leaders will guide your troops through each mission. Each leader has specific skills or magic abilities that affect your units during battle. There's a wide variety of units, which can be upgraded when

Meet the contestants

At the beginning of the game you get to choose which race you want to play. They all have different strengths and weaknesses, and the gameplay changes quite dramatically depending on which race you decide on. This gives the game a high replay value, so you'll probably want to play through all the campaigns on offer. Here's a breakdown of the races and their good and bad points.

THE MARINE FACTION

The Marines are not entirely dissimilar to the units you get when playing the good guys in *Red Alert*. They're not particularly advanced technically, but they more than make up for this with their vastly superior firepower. If blowing the crap out of everything in sight is your bag, then this is the race for you.

THE DESCENDANT FACTION

The 'geeks' of the bunch. The Descendant Faction favour logic and reason over heavy-duty firepower and use brain rather than brawn in the heat of battle. If making fancy hi-tech gadgets is your thing then go for these guys. These human scientists have fairly limited combat abilities but are extremely technologically advanced.

THE S.U.N. FACTION

Not an offshoot of a certain intellectual daily publication, but rather an alliance of the Shama'Li and Eaggra races. They abhor aggression and for this reason have struck the Marines off their Christmas card list. The S.U.N. Faction have superior stealth and magical abilities and produce highly efficient workers.

THE OVERLORD FACTION

This alliance combines the formidable power of the Tha'Roon leadership with the sheer brute force of the Obblinox race. If you want to command the best combat units in the game, the Overlords are the chaps to team up with. Their only weaknesses are a slight lack of firepower and less than impressive construction abilities.

"There are so many things to do in this game that you'll be very grateful you can do all of them with the minimum of fuss."

you build certain structures, and their skill levels can be increased which enables them to build better structures.

Perhaps the biggest point in *Warwind 2*'s favour is the high replay value. Personally, I'd rather have a game with four short, varied campaigns than one very long and potentially repetitive one. My only criticism is that unit selection can sometimes be a confusing and frustrating exercise, due to the fact you have to deselect units you're currently controlling in order to select new ones. Apart from that, *Warwind 2* is a competent, reasonably refreshing addition to an overcrowded genre.

The Marines display their controversial new method of keeping the peace (ie mercilessly bludgeoning to death anyone who steps out of line).

In Perspective

Warwind 2 isn't quite up there with the classics, but it's not far off. It's graphically inferior to everything on the list below (most notably *Total Annihilation* which is arguably the best-looking game in this genre), but don't let that put you off. There's enough gameplay here to keep you going for months. Though how it will compare to *Starcraft* when that comes out next month is anybody's guess.

Warwind 2

Total Annihilation

C&C: Red Alert

WarCraft 2

Warwind 1

Tech Specs

Memory: 16Mb
Processor: P90
Graphics: SVGA
Sound: All major sound cards
Controls: Mouse

Score

Real-time strategy game of the month.

83

Price: £34.99
Release date: Out now
Publisher: Mindscape
Telephone: 01444 246333
Website: www.mindscape.com

dan Personal Computers The People's Choice

Review ZONE Extra!

Some blasts from the dark and distant past rear their ugly heads this month. Does the name Mario ring any bells? Yep, he's back...

***Andretti Racing* is easy, fast and good looking... a bit like 101 other racing games out there.**

ANDRETTI RACING

If you're one of those people prone to keeping candlelight vigils outside public toilets sprayed ten years previously by one of your heroes – or, to be more specific, if you're a saddo fan of Mario Andretti himself - you'll obviously love this game. As per usual with EA Sports titles the presentation is excellent, with suitably annoying music and a truck-full of FMV sequences – including a series of interviews with Super Mario himself.

Players can choose between stock car and IndyCar racing, and either take a quick spin around any of the tracks on offer or tackle a full season. The graphics are predictably good (with 3D acceleration), and the sense of speed is excellent as the landscapes hurtle by.

Andretti Racing certainly deserves a minor commendation for being of high quality, though with shelves already heaving with similar racing titles it's difficult to see this one keeping up with the leaders. If you have an above entry-level PC and want a lightweight racing game then do at least spare this a passing thought.

Richie Shoemaker

Publisher: EA Sports
Tel: 01753 549442
Price: £39.99

73

PERFECT WEAPON

Mediocre games do not do themselves any favours by making comparisons with games like *Tomb Raider*. This beat 'em up may have a couple of similarities – one being a liking for the mass slaughter of wild animals – but *Perfect Weapon* is lacking in so many departments that its star, Blake Hunter, wouldn't last five seconds against our Lara.

***Perfect Weapon* – slow, dull and limited.**

The graphical viewpoints across all five worlds are disorientating, and though there are a fair number of moves, the controls are unresponsive. After five minutes I actually found myself switching between gamepad and keyboard depending on whether I was fighting or exploring.

As an action game, *Perfect Weapon* is slow. As an adventure it's dull, while as a beat 'em up it's very limited due to only catering for the single player. Guns would have made it more fun, and the experience would have been over a lot quicker as well. Avoid.

Richie Shoemaker

Publisher: ASC Games/EA
Tel: 01753 549442
Price: £24.99

38

CATZ II / DOGZ II

We should welcome back these – the original PC Tamagotchi – for a number of reasons. Firstly, they have more personality than all their LCD-driven counterparts (and their owners) put together. Second, you're not compelled to take them to the pub lest they snuff it. Lastly, they don't leave 'little messages' in your pocket – a trait that may well endear them to the exclusion of their carbon-based cousins.

Graphically, improvements are hardly noticeable from the original *Catz* and *Dogz*. However, there are new toys, new personalities (also available from the Web), and the option to have two petz on screen at once - scrapping over doggy biscuits or fish, though try as I might I couldn't get them to shag.

PC Zone pants

ADIDAS POWER SOCCER

With this effort, Psygnosis recall the days when the likes of Hoddle and Waddle graced pitches around the country. Since then, football has developed both technically and in terms of quality. In gaming terms, however, *Adidas Power Soccer* hasn't.

Little thought or effort appears to have gone into this PlayStation conversion, and you have to wonder why Adidas have allowed their brand name to adorn the box. The low-res graphics are abysmal, players move with the fluidity of concrete, and apart from the comedy value of switching to the German commentator, the sound is sparse.

The uninspired controls are consistent with the quality of the rest of the game, and the developers obviously had a problem working out the mechanics of gravity. This extra helping of Christmas turkey will leave you feeling ill and depressed as you sit back in your armchair wondering why you bothered buying this – listen to us in future, eh...

Whether this was the worst game ever or merely the worst football game ever we couldn't decide and you shouldn't have to. Buy any other football game but this. Pants – and muddy ones at that.

Tim MacDonald

Publisher: Psygnosis
Tel: 0151 282 3000
Price: £29.99

6

Charming as they are, *Catz* and *Dogz* only provide a mild diversion. It won't be too long before you find yourself drawn to something of lesser importance. *Quake II* anyone?

Richie Shoemaker

Publisher: Mindscape
Tel: 01444 246333
Price: £19.99
65

RAYMAN GOLD

The platform star with arms noticeable only by their absence is back. For your hard-earned wonga you get the original *Rayman Gold* game, 24 new levels and a mapper that will allow you to inflict your own abysmal level designs on the rest of humanity.

Surprisingly, the game's just as playable as it was when it first appeared, almost two years ago. The new levels offer much of the same, although they tend to lean towards the difficult side and could induce more than a little frustration. The graphics are somewhat dated, but they move fluidly enough and are colourful and clear. Although the map editor is a nice touch, I can't imagine many people making use of it.

Rayman Gold is quite good value if you're a fan of platform games and intend to stick with it. Personally, I prefer *Earthworm Jim* – he's armed, cheap at half the price and excellent for baiting small birds.

Richie Shoemaker

Publisher: Ubi Soft
Tel: 0181 944 9000
Price: £19.99
66

FINAL LIBERATION

Table-top wargaming is an expensive hobby to which Warhammer 40,000 proves no exception. First, you have to spend time and money on painting lead miniatures. Then you have to find like-minded individuals with bad skin and lank hair to play against. A fanatical devotion to bands called Pustule, Pig Vomit and Heavy Scrotum is, of course, mandatory. Thankfully, *Final Liberation* could just save you time, money and street cred.

The game centres on ridding the planet Volistad of space orks by progressing through 30 or so missions, wiping away all trace of their foul presence. All the units are faithfully reproduced from the lead originals, from the mighty Titans down to Space Marines and Gretchins. In the solo

(Above) ***Final Liberation*****: not bad but could have been so much better. (Left)** ***Catz*** **and** ***Dogz*** **before they were taken to the vet for their lethal injections. (Below) Rayman's back and he's going for gold.**

game you only get to control humans, which is a tad disappointing, though at least you can play multi-player battles on the one PC.

The game structure stays faithful to Games Workshop's original – it's turn based, you get to spend credits and you can arrange your detachments and Titan weapon configurations.

However, the game fails to capture the atmosphere of its dice-rolling counterpart. While the graphics for all the units are detailed and clear, the landscapes are rather dull. It would have been pleasing to see more races and other units from the original game, as well as a feature to edit colour schemes and customise units.

Warhammer 40,000 fans might be a little disappointed with this effort, and fans of strategy games will easily find better games elsewhere. *Final Liberation* is certainly playable but more effort could have made it something wonderful.

As it stands, *Final Liberation* is only a run-of-the-mill strategy game. After a while you realise the only thing that makes it special is that it's based on the old table-top game. Best not throw out those Pig Vomit albums just yet.

Richie Shoemaker

Publisher: Mindscape
Tel: 01444 246333
Price: £39.99
65

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Ubi Soft

Budget ZONE

Ten years ago you could buy a full-price game for £5 and still have change for a Nik Kershaw album. Today, £5 will get you one game from the Sold Out range and leave you with 1p, strangely still enough for a Nik Kershaw album. Richie Shoemaker checks 'em out.

Make up your mind, Muad'dib – do you want the secret of the Mentats or not?

DUNE

This curious mix of adventure and strategy still manages to work well. Based on the classic sci-fi film based on the classic sci-fi novel, you have to go around and enlist the help of the natives of *Dune*, the Fremen. You have to collect enough spice to appease the Dali-esque Emperor and eventually defeat the evil Harkonnens. The adventuring isn't too difficult and the strategy isn't even a patch on the sequel, *Dune 2*, but for a fiver you should have no complaints at all.

Reviewed Issue: 7
Price: £4.99
82

LURE OF THE TEMPTRESS

This is one of the first point-and-click adventures and it's sadly very dated. It's one of those 'you awake in a cell without a clue as to what the chuffin' 'ell is going on'-type affairs that we've seen a hundred times before. The graphics are rudimentary, the sound is minimal and the control system unwieldy. The gameplay is solid enough but you'll have to decide for yourself whether this game is worth the price of a couple of frothy pints.

Reviewed Issue: 60
Price: £4.99
30

CREATURE SHOCK

Creature Shock is an atmospheric shoot 'em up where you must navigate through some easy-peasy maps and zap nasty alien types who get in your way. It requires little brain power and only one hand, leaving your other one free to sup coffee, stroke the kitten or even dunk your biscuit. Nice visuals complement a highly polished game – just don't expect an intellectual challenge of any description.

Reviewed Issue: 22
Price: £4.99
78

THE 7TH GUEST

Visually impressive four years ago – if you had a ninja 386 – *The 7th Guest* still holds its own both graphically and sonically against some of today's full price efforts. Shame, then, that the gameplay is poo. *The 7th Guest* adds up to a series of mild brain-teasers wrapped up in spooky adventure game clothing. The puzzles are simple and although they are integrated well into the cheesy storyline, you have to feel sorry for those who coughed up £70 for the original release. For a fiver, now that's more like it.

Reviewed Issue: 4
Price: £4.99
60

Travel the universe. Meet bizarre aliens. And kill them.

Snappy visuals but simple puzzles – who cares, it's only a fiver...

GOAL

Before *Sensible Soccer* rose to top spot, *Kick Off 2* was the best footy game around. The response from Dino Dini was *Goal* – and it sucked. Today the bad graphics are even worse and the sound is, for want of a better word, offensive. There are loads of options to play with but if you really want an ageing footy sim at a cheap price then go for *SWOS* because it's ten times better at only twice the price.

Reviewed Issue: 9
Price: £4.99
60

A load of old shite, Jimmy? I couldn't agree more, Trevor.

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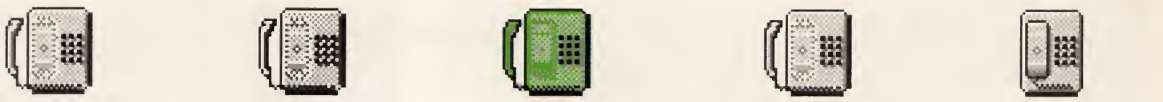


ZONE On-Line

Get on-line now

Do you always flick past this section when reading through the magazine? You do? Do you know what you're missing out on?

CAN YOU AFFORD *NOT* TO BE CONNECTED? THIS IS what you must ask yourself. Why resign yourself to a single-player games-playing existence for the rest of your natural life? Didn't you know there's an on-line revolution going on out there?

Don't look at the World Wide Web as nothing more than an ever-expanding tree of trivial information – there's much more to it than that. With a modem, a telephone account and an Internet Service Provider (see following feature) you can play many top games against other people either over the Internet, or via dedicated servers that you dial directly into.

One direct-dial games service that's currently undergoing something of a phoenix-like revival is Wireplay. Their rejuvenation is attracting a flood of new conscripts to the on-line gaming revolution. Wireplay suddenly find themselves owning the fastest *QuakeWorld* servers in the world – enough to draw any right-thinking gamesplaying individual in itself – but in a month or two they'll no doubt have the fastest *Quake II* servers as well. The service also showcases the multi-player prowess of other new games (*Total Annihilation, Actua Soccer 2, Age Of Empires* and *Jedi Knight* to name but a few) and is pretty cheap off-peak (£1.20 an hour). When you compare how much you'd spend in an arcade in one hour next to this, and the fact that you're playing against real people at the other end of a PC, there doesn't seem to be any valid reason why you shouldn't want to get involved.

Internet multi-play is improving all the time too. There'll no doubt be a number of people shooting it out on NovaLogic's excellent *F-22 Raptor* server as you read this. Logging on is piss simple, it's cheap and is pretty much lag free. Resident *Zone* propeller-head Paul Presley pretty much swears by it, and has been hassling me to mention it for a couple of weeks now. If you've got a copy of the game and haven't wired yourself up yet – sort it out! You're not making the most of it.

Paul Mallinson

ISP-y, with my little eye

It's not where you go but how you get there. Jamie Cunningham becomes one with his telephone bill and takes a long hard look at seven of the country's more popular Internet Service Providers.

Quake, C&C: Red Alert, Grand Theft Auto – these days nearly every top-selling game supports Internet play, allowing you to compete with opponents from all over the world at the click of a button. So chances are you've got the game, but what about the Internet Service Provider (ISP)?

To answer this question, we rounded up seven of the larger ISPs and put them through their paces. We went surfing on the web, downloaded files, sent electronic mail and tested the connection to numerous *QuakeWorld* servers.

Contenders, ready!

Step forward BT, Demon, Direct Connection, Global, Pipex, Prestel and Virgin. All offer a standard dial-up connection that will allow you to dash out into cyberspace and onto the long, socially inadequate slope that leads to Net freakdom.

Vroom vroom

The obvious question: how fast is your ISP? Do you have to keep rattling the mouse to stop your screensaver kicking in when downloading files? And if you have ISDN, does the ISP talk the same language?

To give our list of providers their fitness test, we sent e-mail, pinged a variety of *QuakeWorld* servers, visited a list of web pages (iD Software, Microsoft, Netscape, Yahoo, Vitalsigns, Altavista, *PC Zone*) and downloaded a 130Kb test file from a UK web server. The analysis was performed at different times of the day over a five-day period with a 33.6Kbps modem.

E-mail delivery was prompt in every case, and the average ping to *QuakeWorld* servers was steady, if not impressive, but the time it took to grab our test file varied from a zippy 34 seconds to a glacial two minutes, and the average web surfing speed went from 12.1Kbps up to 18Kbps. Take a look at the charts and see for yourself.

Software

If you've never used a browser before, it's hard to explain the difference between the two market leaders. Netscape's Navigator and Microsoft's Internet Explorer both allow you to look at web pages; both have the ability to deal with electronic mail and newsgroups; both fall over with startling regularity. Whether you get the Netscape or Microsoft solution as part of your ISP sign-up pack, the results are effectively the same – so unless you have a particular fondness for either product, don't let that sway you. But electronic mail is still the most popular method of communicating on the Internet by far, and neither browser is really cut out for it – we recommend you look into a dedicated third-party mail client such as Qualcomm Eudora.

Technical support

Technical support is more important than you might think. Although the Internet was designed to be unbreakable, quite often you'll find that web servers, routers and modems go 'fzzzt' in the middle of the night and refuse to work again until someone's come along and prodded the right bits. Even the nerdiest cyberdork occasionally gets stuck and has to contact his ISP's help desk.

The technical support departments of all our ISPs were up to scratch, although Global's help was hidden away behind a huge call-queuing system and Prestel, for some reason, refused to answer their mail.

How we did it

We tested each dial-up account individually and as thoroughly as we could. From the start we decided the emphasis should be on speed rather than software, as the average gamer would be likely to fall asleep if we launched into the nuances of FTP clients.

The information for our tests came from *PC Zone* and from an independent panel of ISP customers. There's no way that any of the providers could have done anything to improve their figures or provide preferential treatment: what you see is a very good indication of what you'll get. To help us make sense of the data, we used a program called Net Medic Pro, which provides a deluge of information about any active dial-up networking connection, and is quite frankly something no subscriber should be without. You can download a free evaluation version from **http://www.vitalsigns.com**.

The conclusion

Difficult. Aside from one or two exceptions, the majority of ISPs tested performed admirably and gave quick, trouble-free connections. In the final analysis, we decided Direct Connection and Global Internet were the best. Both were unfailingly reliable, gave good performance, and had friendly help desks. Direct Connection made the grade for their level of service and the speed with which web pages appeared; Global simply can't be ignored for their bargain basement prices and broad support for modem standards.

EARTH TO UNCLE SAM

AOL and CompuServe were both selected to take part in the test. When we mailed the UK sales departments of both companies, our message bounced back with an error. We tried once more to another address, and again it failed. So we sent a message to the two companies over in the States, and at the time of going to press we still hadn't had a response. Perhaps we should have tried different routes to get the stuff we needed, but why start making exceptions? The two American giants fell at the first hurdle, and that's all you need to know.

The lesson here is that you can safely continue using those free trial CDs as drinks mats and dog chews. We don't believe you're missing anything.

DEMON INTERNET

http://www.demon.net

The going rates

- £14.69 set-up
- £11.75 per month unlimited access; £155.68 per year; £185.05 per year with Demon Internet Suite

What you get

- Static IP address
- Unlimited e-mail addresses
- 5Mb free web space
- Modem (33.6Kbps max) or ISDN
- Help desk available 24 hours, 7 days a week
- *Demon Dispatches* magazine

The verdict

Demon are about the largest and most mature provider of our bunch. FAQs are numerous, easy to find, and answer all the right kind of questions. The Demon news server also carries every group imaginable: coprophiliacs take note. Their help desk was answered promptly and courteously, and the people we spoke to seemed knowledgeable. The fly in the ointment was the average speed: a leisurely 12.1Kbps.

Contact: Demon
Tel: 0181 371 1234
e-mail: sales@demon.net

BT INTERNET

http://www.btinternet.com

The going rates

- No set-up fee
- Plan Unlimited: £11.75 per month unlimited access; £129.95 per year
- Plan 180: £4.70 per month 3 hours access, subsequent hours £2.35

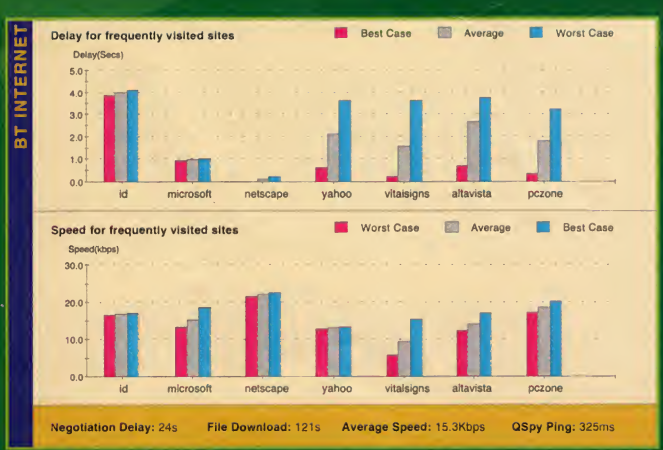
What you get

- Internet Explorer 3.02 suite
- 5 e-mail addresses
- 5Mb free web space
- Modem (33.6Kbps max) or ISDN
- Help desk available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

The verdict

BT Internet represent good value and were one of the more consistent performers on our speed charts. 56Kbps modem support is on the way soon, but nobody knew when. Their home website is rather barren, offering nothing of value to prospective customers. BT's technical support department was quick and courteous, but gave us the wrong answer with regard to an enquiry about ISDN.

Contact: BT Internet
Tel: 0800 800 001
e-mail: sales@btinternet.com



DIRECT CONNECTION

http://www.dircon.net

The going rates

- £8.80 set-up
- £13.50 per month unlimited access

What you get

- Internet Explorer 3.02 suite
- Single e-mail address
- 5Mb free web space
- Access via modem (33.6Kbps max) or ISDN
- Help desk available 9am to 9pm weekdays, 10am to 5pm weekends

The verdict

Direct Connection are very image conscious – their connection pack makes you feel part of a clique. Their website is well put together and has all the right info. The charts show that, in practical terms, they're one of the fastest providers. The ping to *QuakeWorld* servers was low and the delay in accessing web pages was next to nothing. They were the quickest to respond to mails, and their phone help desk was prompt and courteous.

Contact: Direct Connection
Tel: 0800 072 0000
e-mail: sales@dircon.net

GLOBAL INTERNET

http://www.global.net.uk

The going rates

- £11.75 set-up fee if paying monthly
- £8.81 per month unlimited access; £105.74 per year
- ISDN connection at extra cost

What you get

- Internet Explorer 4 suite
- Unlimited e-mail addresses
- 3Mb free web space
- Modem (up to 56Kbps x2 or K56flex)
- Help desk available 9am to 9pm weekdays, 10am to 6pm weekends
- *The Globe* magazine

The verdict

Global are the cheapest of the bunch by a huge margin. In any other industry you'd expect breakdowns and glacially slow connections – but not here. They performed as well as, if not better than, their rivals and were the only one with full support for both 56Kbps standards – and you get a free magazine. Strangely though, the maze of pages on the Global website don't mention the £11.75 set-up fee if you pay on a monthly basis.

Contact: Global
Tel: 0870 909 8000
e-mail: sales@global.net.uk

PIPEX DIAL

http://www.dial.pipex.com

The going rates

- £11.75 set-up
- £14.98 per month unlimited access

What you get

- Pipex Dial (includes Internet Explorer 3.02, Terrapin FTP and HTML editor)
- 5 e-mail addresses
- 2Mb free web space
- Modem (up to 56Kbps x2) or ISDN
- Help desk available 9am to 8pm weekdays, 10am to 6pm Saturdays
- E-WEB technology allows you to read e-mail from a web page

The verdict

Our results show that Pipex's reputation for speed is well-deserved. The web pages were noticeably quicker, with no perceivable difference between UK and US servers. The test file downloaded in 34 seconds (a second less than Demon), there's full support for 56Kbps x2 modems and, uniquely, you can catch up on your e-mail worldwide using their E-WEB technology. The only problem is the monthly price-tag and measly web space allocation.

Contact: PIPEX Dial
Tel: 0500 474739
e-mail: sales@dial.pipex.com

PRESTEL ON-LINE

http://www.prestel.net

The going rates

- No set-up fee
- £10.56 per month unlimited access; £117.48 per year

What you get

- Internet Explorer 3.02 suite
- Unlimited e-mail addresses
- Unlimited web space
- Modem (33.6Kbps max)
- Help desk available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

The verdict

Prestel recently boasted of a huge influx of subscribers from other providers. Sadly, this seems to have had an adverse effect on their service. Theirs was the only service that gave us a busy signal or dropped the connection halfway through, and our mails to their help desk went unanswered. The average connection speed was next to worst. But the cost is extremely reasonable, and you get unlimited e-mail addresses and web space.

Contact: Prestel
Tel: 0800 800 001
e-mail: sales@prestel.net

VIRGIN NET

http://www.virgin.net

The going rates

- No set-up fee
- £11.99 per month unlimited access

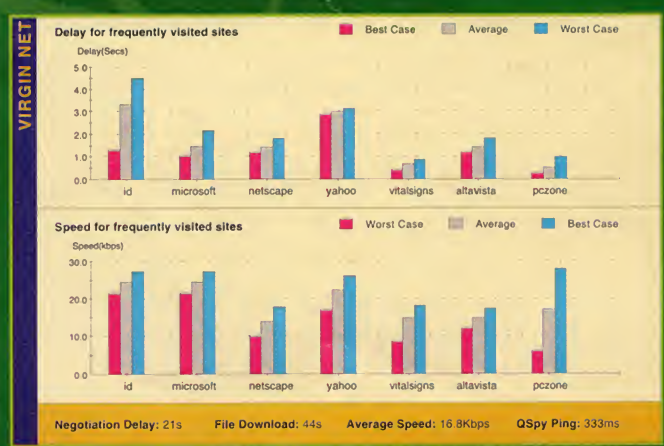
What you get

- Virgin Netscape Navigator suite
- Five e-mail addresses
- Modem (up to 56Kbps x2) or ISDN
- Help desk available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

The verdict

Like Direct, Virgin have a strong image. The connection was fast, the price was right, and the help desk were the quickest and most cheerful. Experienced users may find the service aimed at the beginner: their software pack installed software I already had, overwriting my settings and refused to uninstall. The manual, with its bright colours and big pictures, may be useful for first-timers but is of no value to anyone else.

Contact: Virgin
Tel: 0500 55 88 00
e-mail: sales@virgin.net



On-Line News & Gossip

The page with its finger on the pulse of on-line gaming.

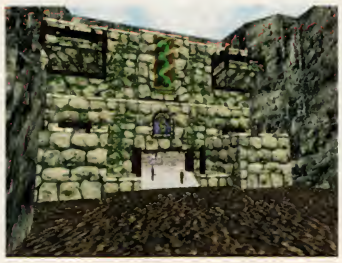
Sony goes role-playing on-line

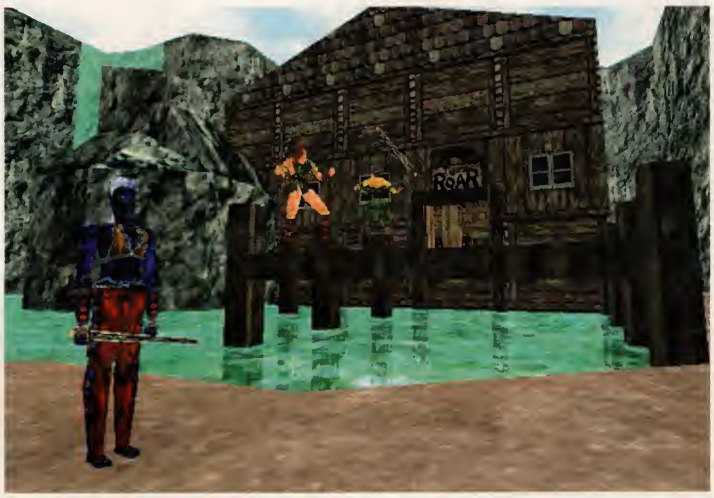
EVERQUEST IS SONY INTERACTIVE STUDIO'S UPCOMING MULTI-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING game, set in a 3D on-line environment replete with creatures, continents, economics and politics. Dungeons, towers, crypts and all the usual role-playing accoutrements form the basis of the *EverQuest* world, with the player able to choose from 12 races and 14 classes including dwarves, ogres, trolls, rangers, wizards and rogues.

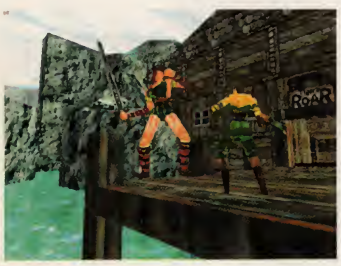
An endless array of quests are provided to tickle your fancy, but in Sony's environment there's no obligation to do them. Slob around with some mates, or hack the heads off strangers and knock over the local bank with a sawn-off catapult (if that's what turns you on). Interestingly, the plan is to have *EverQuest* Game Masters (GMs) on-line all day – not only to fix the server when it falls over, but also to take charge of non-player characters. So when you round a corner and bump into a fire-spitting dragon, there's every chance it'll have a real person fanning its flames.

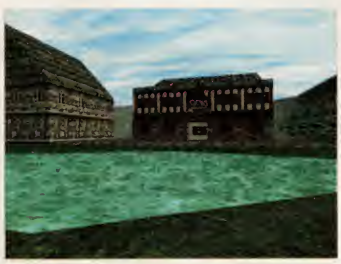
Combat, of course, is one of the most important areas of any RPG, and Sony have taken an unusual approach. Character skills and equipment are more important than deftness with a joystick, which achieves three key things: it keeps the character rather than the player dominant; it levels the field for both gameheads and newbies alike; and it deals with the ever-present issue of latency.

EverQuest offers both 16-bit SVGA first-person and third-person viewpoints, and requires a Direct3D-compatible accelerator in order to stir polygons around the screen (no sprites here, folks). Keep an eye on the *EverQuest* website at **www.everquest.com** for all the latest news and schedules.









The quest for the perfect on-line RPG continues with Sony's *EverQuest*.

World's first commercial Java game

BILLED AS THE world's first full-scale game undertaken in Java and freely available on the Internet, *Ronin* sees players raiding each other's castles with bands of vagabond Samurai warriors. The aim of the game being to take over Japan by engulfing enemy territory and forming clans and allegiances with other players.

Fingers crossed for better graphics in the game itself...

Developers BigFun wanted *Ronin* to be both easy to find and easy to join, and the best way to achieve this was to make the game accessible from a Web browser. So the software is entirely native to the Internet, and much time has been spent getting clever with code in order to get around the medium's limitations.

Ronin can be found at **http://www.bigfun.net.**

Nildram go spambusting crazy

Pump-action Winchesters at crazy prices!!! See my foot-wide hooters!!! Earn $$$ (or your money back)!!!

UNSOLICITED ELECTRONIC MAIL – OR 'SPAM' AS IT'S OFTEN CALLED – IS here to stay. To combat this tide of pointlessness, Nildram, one of the country's lesser-known ISPs, have implemented a free, optional mail server system which scores incoming mail in an attempt to determine its spam content. Fifteen points and it gets junked. To make things bullet-proof, a summary of deleted mail is forwarded to the user, who can then request a full copy of any message before it gets vaporised.

Spam sufferers seek solace at **http://www.nildram.co.uk.**

Who ya gonna call? Spambusters!

ASCEND TO NEW HEIGHTS

WARHEADS

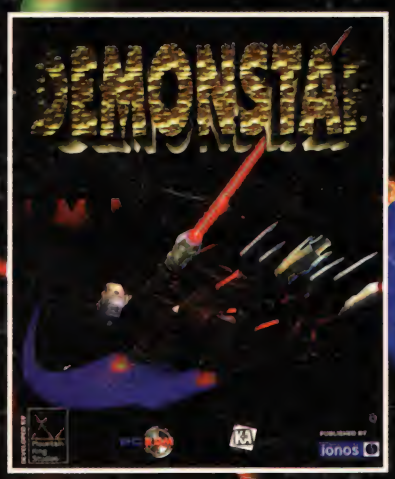
Interplanetary Ballistic Warfare, can you survive?

Your mission is to seek out and pummel your opponents

L.E.D. WARS

Control L.E.D. and rule the Universe!

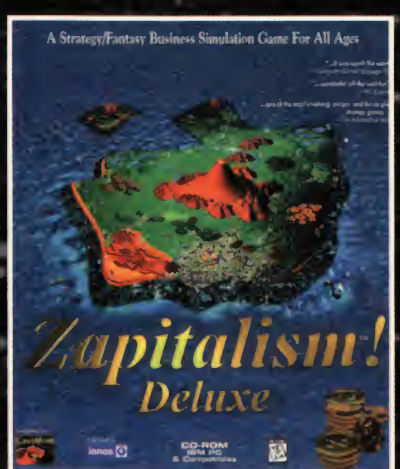
For hard core real-time strategy addicts!



DEMONSTAR

Choose your weapons and prepare for battle!

Pilot the RaptorX, destroy the DemonStar empire & conquer the Armada fleet !



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Pure greed on a CD-ROM

Another get - rich - quick scheme? - play it and find out !

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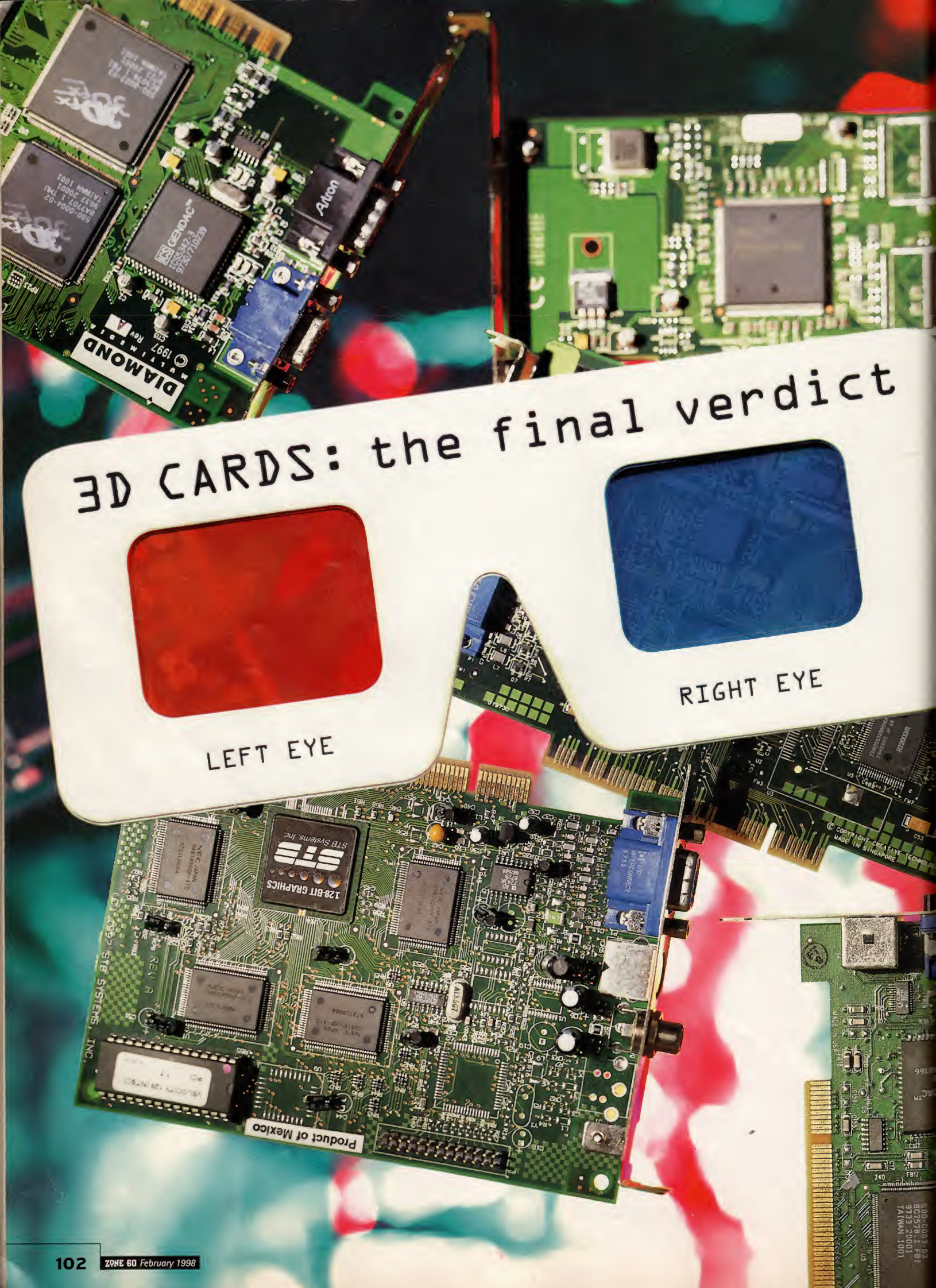
http://www.instantaccess.com

mail@instantaccess.com

Tel: (0181) 205 2596

3D CARDS: the final verdict



Dave Mathieson takes his life in his hands and makes his way cautiously through the ever-growing 3D graphics card jungle. Chris Anderson sits back and gives directions.

WHILE £1000 PCS HAVE PLENTY OF POWER FOR RUNNING ALL sorts of software, from web browsers to word processors, in purely graphical terms, they still can't compete with £100 consoles. Well, not without some help, anyway. Consoles have better graphics because they've been designed that way. They contain chips that are specifically designed to accelerate 3D graphics; a PC's graphics are typically handled by its general purpose CPU.

Over the past couple of years this dedicated graphics technology has arrived for the PC in the form of 3D cards. The first cards did add a bit of horsepower, but not enough to convince software developers to support them. More recently, we've started to see cards that are finally capable of bringing console-stomping graphics to the grey box in your bedroom. There have still been problems with compatibility, with different card manufacturers trying to get games written to support their card, but things have settled down, and there are plenty of titles that either support chipsets directly, or use Microsoft's improved Direct3D API.

Most of the cards use 3Dfx's Voodoo chipset, but there's plenty of competition from the likes of the PowerVR and Riva 128. In contrast to our last 3D card round-up, all the cards on test here are capable of running the right game at a decent frame rate. There are plenty of important differences though, and to be worth buying, a card has to be able to run the games you've already got. But don't worry – we've tested them all, and we'll tell you which one to buy.

PowerVR

The biggest rival to 3Dfx's chipsets is the PowerVR, developed by VideoLogic and NEC. PowerVR uses a completely different approach to 3Dfx, and although both chipsets support Direct3D and OpenGL games, there are also 'native' titles that support only one chipset or another, with 3Dfx way on top in this department.

VIDEOLOGIC APOCALYPSE 3DX

Price: £93 (£69 without games)
Telephone: VideoLogic (01923 260511)
Rating: 89%

The Apocalypse 3Dx is VideoLogic's second generation PowerVR card. Like Voodoo cards, it's a standalone job that works alongside your existing 2D card. However, it's neater as there's no external cable – bung it in a spare PCI slot and it handles the communication internally.

Its main advantage over Voodoo cards is that it does the 3D work itself, but uses your 2D card to display the finished images. This means that you can play games in a window, and it can manage higher resolutions than 3Dfx cards.

On the downside, it's simply not as quick on most PCs as a 3Dfx card, and our tests showed that frame rates are noticeably lower. However, if you've got a very fast PC the gap closes. PowerVR can also manage higher resolutions and 3D in a window. That said, there aren't as many games available that support PowerVR directly, which means that you're largely limited to Direct3D and OpenGL titles. There are plenty of these available, though, and the Apocalypse 3Dx is very cheap. Oh, and it also comes with four full games, including *ULTIM@TE RACE*, probably the best-looking racing game out there.

MATROX M3D

Price: £88
Telephone: Matrox (01793 441144)
Rating: 85%

The m3D is virtually identical to the Apocalypse 3Dx, again working with your existing 2D card.

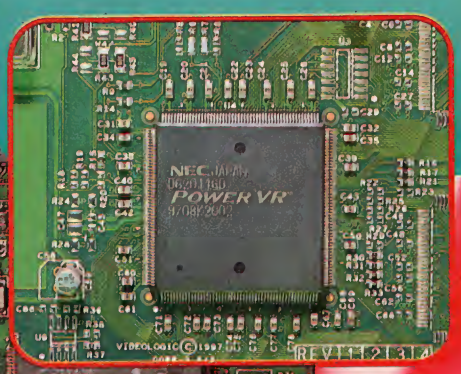
The m3D also comes with *ULTIM@TE RACE* and *MDK*, which are both decent titles, but since it's only slightly cheaper than the Apocalypse and comes with less games, you're probably better off with the 3Dx.

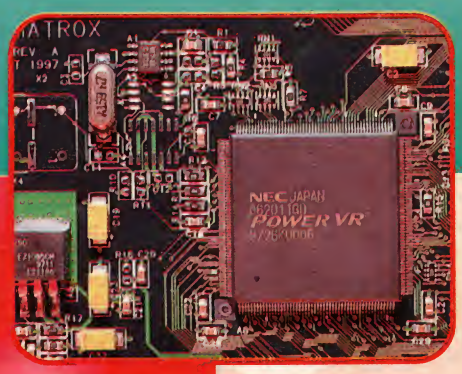
VIDEOLOGIC APOCALYPSE 5D SONIC

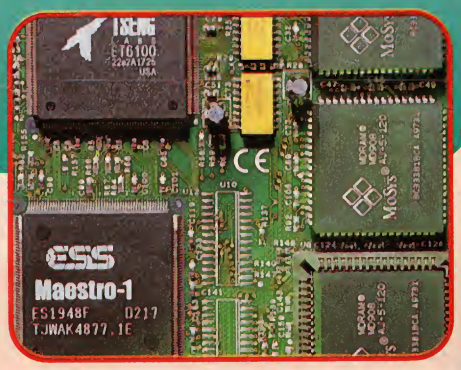
Price: £222
Telephone: VideoLogic (01923 260511)
Rating: 81%

Standalone 3D cards are fine if you've already got a decent 2D one, but combining the two on one card is even better if your existing one isn't up to much. The 5D Sonic goes further by adding sound, which on paper sounds like gamer's heaven. The 2D graphics are taken care of by a pretty speedy Tseng Labs chipset, which is great for DOS games, while 3D images are boosted by the same PCX2 chipset as the Apocalypse 3Dx.

As an all-in-one solution, the Sonic is a good bet. The Hercules Stingray is faster at 3D work, but worse at 2D; the ATi and Riva 128-based cards can match it on 2D, but have better 3D. As with the Apocalypse 3Dx, you get a decent selection of games, and the sound capabilities are worth having. It's a bit pricey, though.







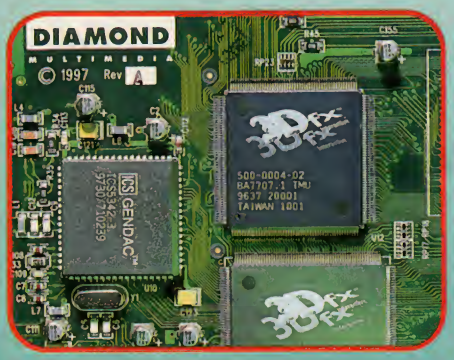
3Dfx

3Dfx cards come in two varieties: Voodoo and Voodoo Rush. Voodoo cards are standalone 3D accelerators that are connected to your existing 2D card using a pass-through cable, and they kick in when you run a compatible game. Voodoo Rush cards provide both 2D and 3D functionality in one card. Most games that are '3Dfx compatible' work with both types of card, but a plain Voodoo card is your best bet for total compatibility.

DIAMOND MONSTER 3D

Price: £149
Telephone: Diamond Multimedia (01189 444400)
Rating: 89%

The Monster uses a 3Dfx Voodoo chipset, and comes with 4Mb of RAM, with 2Mb reserved for the texture cache and the rest for the frame buffer. This limits the card to a maximum effective resolution of 640x480, whereas the other non-3Dfx cards on test here can all go much higher.



As with all the Voodoo cards on test here, the Monster 3D is quick and will run any 3D game. Voodoo also has more of an effect on slower systems, so you'll see big benefits on P133 systems, for example, whereas most other chipsets only get going with a faster CPU.

While the Monster isn't the cheapest 3Dfx card you can buy, it does come bundled with a decent range of games and demos, which makes it a good choice for the 3D virgin.

ORCHID RIGHTEOUS 3D

Price: £210
Telephone: Orchid Micronics (01256 817722)
Rating: 88%

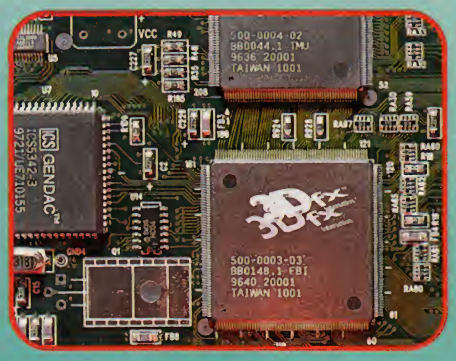
Like Diamond, Orchid have been making graphics cards for ages, and the R3D, like the Monster, has been around for over a year. Again, the R3D is a standalone 3D card with a pass-through cable that connects to your existing 2D card.

As you'd expect, the Righteous 3D's performance is virtually the same as that of the Monster. It also comes with a selection of games and demos, so choosing between it and the Monster really comes down to a question of price. On the face of it, the Monster will set you back £50 less, so you'd expect it to win hands down. However, both cards are actually available for around £120, so there's not a lot in it.

MAXI GAMER 3D

Price: £119
Telephone: Ubi Soft (0181 944 9000)
Rating: 91%

The Maxi Gamer 3D is a relatively new card from the people who brought you *Pod*, the fab futuristic racing game. It's another Voodoo card, with the same set-up as the Righteous and Monster. The installation isn't as slick though,



and it comes with the standard 3Dfx card drivers rather than its own customised software. This doesn't make any difference to performance, but it keeps the cost down.

The Maxi Gamer 3D comes with *Pod*, plus a selection of demos and patches. It's cheaper than the Orchid and Diamond cards, so for no-frills 3Dfx action it's the best card going.

MIROHISCORE3D

Price: £150
Telephone: Mentor (01582 483381)
Rating: 95%

The HISCORE 3D differs from other Voodoo cards in one main respect – it's got an extra 2Mb of texture cache. This may not sound like much, but games with lots of textures, such as flight sims, frequently pause while new textures are loaded – which is pretty damn annoying when it happens. The HISCORE 3D's extra RAM dramatically reduces the frequency of these pauses. It's also got a television output for top telly action.

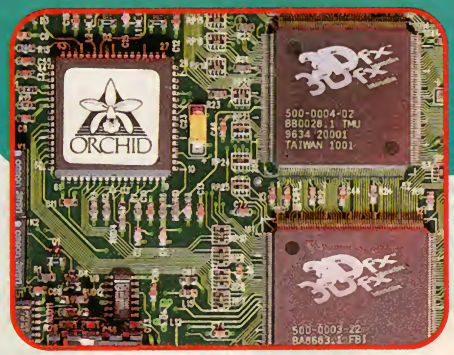
Unless you play flight sims you probably won't notice much of a difference, so you could save money by buying a less well-endowed 3Dfx card. However, if you want the best possible 3Dfx performance out there, we recommend you buy the HISCORE 3D.

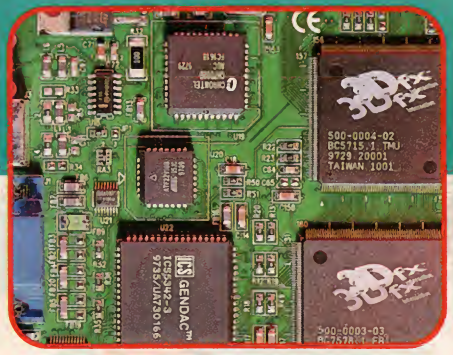
HERCULES STINGRAY 128 3D

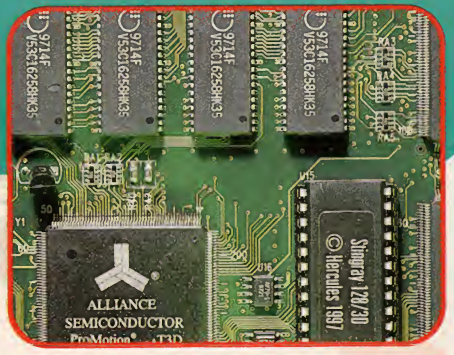
Price: £233
Telephone: Imago Micro (01635 294300)
Rating: 78%

The Stingray uses the Voodoo Rush chipset for combined 2D and 3D graphics. In theory, this sounds like the ideal solution, as you get 3Dfx performance with 2D thrown in for free. Because they're combined you can also get accelerated 3D in a window – which is something that standard Voodoo cards can't manage.

However, the Stingray's 3D acceleration is slower than the 3D-only Voodoo cards, and the 2D performance is a long way behind the other 2D/3D cards on test here. If you want 3Dfx compatibility, we can only really recommend the Stingray if you haven't got enough slots for a separate 2D card, or if you absolutely must have 3D in a window.







Other chipsets

While 3Dfx and PowerVR chipsets are the best-known specialist 3D accelerators, there are other systems that also offer plenty of welly. The nVidia Riva 128 is a combined chipset that's fast at both 2D and 3D, as is the ATi Rage Pro.

ATI XPERT@PLAY

Price: £152 (4Mb), £175 (8Mb)
Telephone: ATi (01628 533115)
Rating: 85%

ATi have been making 3D chipsets for a couple of years now, but they haven't been great performers. However, the Xpert@play features the new Rage Pro chipset, a much speedier proposition altogether. What you get is fast 2D, and Direct3D performance that's almost as quick as the Riva 128 and 3Dfx chipsets, and faster than PowerVR. Like the other non-3Dfx cards here, it can also manage higher resolutions than 640x480, although performance drops off as you squeeze more pixels on the screen.

The biggest advantage that the Xpert@play has over Riva-based cards is that ATi have done a very good job of persuading PC manufacturers to stick the cards in their PCs, with the result that games developers have a reason to support the chipset directly. The Xpert@play also has a television output, and comes with *Formula 1* and *Terracide*.

The Xpert@play's good set of features, combined with good performance and the promise of future native support makes it a fine all-round bet.

STB VELOCITY 128 3D

Price: £147
Telephone: STB (0181 897 1003)
Rating: 90%

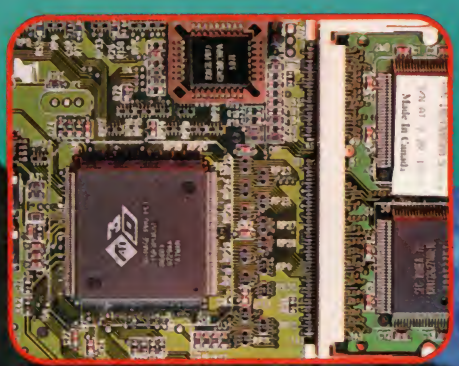
The Velocity uses the nVidia Riva 128 chipset which accelerates both 2D and 3D graphics. Like the ATi, it's got good 2D performance, but the 3D is better, and it handles higher resolutions more efficiently than other chipsets.

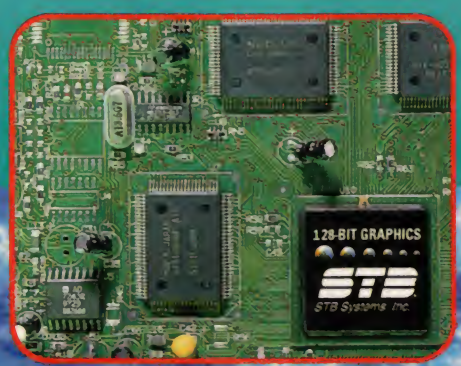
What's not clear, though, is to what extent it will be supported directly by developers. At the moment you're limited to Direct3D games, which, to be fair, it runs very well. It's also cheap, offers a TV output port and comes with *FIFA 97*, *MotoRacer* and *Interstate 76*. It's also cheaper than the Diamond Viper 330, which makes it the best 2D/3D combo card here.

DIAMOND VIPER 330

Price: £186
Telephone: Diamond Multimedia (01189 444400)
Rating: 85%

The Viper 330 is very similar to the STB Velocity, but proved slightly faster in our tests. It comes bundled with *iF-22*, *MotoRacer* and *MDK*, but it's considerably more expensive than the Velocity 128. However, its performance still makes it a very good choice.





	JEDI KNIGHT		MOTORACER		QUAKE II		LONGBOW 2		SCREAMER RALLY		FLIGHT SIM 98	
Diamond Monster 3D	P133	6	P133	7	P133	6	P133	4	P133	8	P133	5
	P166	8	P166	8	P166	7	P166	7	P166	9	P166	7
	P200	10	P200	10	P200	9	P200	8	P200	10	P200	9
Orchid 3D Righteous	P133	6	P133	7	P133	6	P133	4	P133	8	P133	5
	P166	8	P166	8	P166	7	P166	7	P166	9	P166	7
	P200	10	P200	10	P200	9	P200	8	P200	10	P200	9
Maxi Gamer 3D	P133	6	P133	7	P133	6	P133	4	P133	8	P133	5
	P166	8	P166	8	P166	7	P166	7	P166	9	P166	7
	P200	10	P200	10	P200	9	P200	8	P200	10	P200	9
miroHISCORE 3D	P133	6	P133	7	P133	7	P133	4	P133	8	P133	5
	P166	8	P166	8	P166	8	P166	8	P166	9	P166	8
	P200	10	P200	10	P200	9	P200	9	P200	10	P200	10
Hercules Stingray 128	P133	6	P133	7	P133	6	P133	4	P133	8	P133	5
	P166	8	P166	8	P166	7	P166	7	P166	9	P166	7
	P200	10	P200	10	P200	9	P200	8	P200	10	P200	9
VideoLogic Apocalypse 3Dx	P133	5	P133	6	P133	5	Not supported		Not supported		P133	4
	P166	7	P166	7	P166	7					P166	7
	P200	8	P200	9	P200	8					P200	8
VideoLogic 5D Sonic	P133	5	P133	6	P133	5	Not supported		Not supported		P133	4
	P166	7	P166	7	P166	7					P166	7
	P200	8	P200	9	P200	8					P200	8
Matrox m3D	P133	5	P133	6	P133	5	Not supported		Not supported		P133	4
	P166	7	P166	7	P166	7					P166	7
	P200	8	P200	9	P200	8					P200	8
ATi Xpert@play	P133	6	P133	7	Not supported		Not supported		Not supported		P133	5
	P166	8	P166	9							P166	8
	P200	10	P200	10							P200	9
STB Velocity 128	P133	6	P133	7	P133	4	Not supported		Not supported		P133	5
	P166	9	P166	9	P166	6					P166	8
	P200	10	P200	10	P200	7					P200	9
Diamond Viper 330	P133	7	P133	6	P133	4	Not supported		Not supported		P133	5
	P166	9	P166	8	P166	6					P166	8
	P200	10	P200	10	P200	7					P200	9

Technical info

3D graphics cards are pretty smart things to have, but these lovely graphics aren't magic. Instead, they come courtesy of some pretty serious hardware, much of which is dedicated to doing the same calculations that unaccelerated games have to do in software, only faster.

As you've probably noticed when playing games, the textures used in many games can often look a bit rough when you get close up. So apart from just getting the textures in the right place at a decent speed, 3D cards also try to make them look a bit more realistic. You can see the general effect by looking at the walls in a game like *Jedi Knight*. On a normal, unaccelerated system, the blockiness is pretty apparent, whereas with a 3D card, everything has been smoothed out.

3D cards also improve image quality by using more colours, working in 16-bit colour instead of the more usual 8-bit. This means smoother lighting and shadows. These effects and enhancements vary from card to card, and manufacturers usually like to quote a massive list of capabilities. Some of the main ones are:

BILINEAR FILTERING

When you approach a brick wall in say, *Doom*, it looks fine from a distance. As you get closer, the texture is simply magnified, and what were individual pixels become big squares of a single colour. Bilinear filtering averages out the magnification, making for a smoother image.

MIP MAPPING

When big textures are scaled down too much, they can often look a bit crap and 'sparkly'. MIP mapping uses lower resolution textures for further-away objects, which look better.

Z-BUFFER

This makes sure that objects and parts of objects hidden from view stay that way on the final image. A Z-buffer is a piece of memory that stores depth information for each pixel on the screen so that pixels hidden by others needn't be drawn.

Conclusion

So which card is the best? To an extent it depends on what you want, because all these cards can dump all over an unaccelerated PC. If your 2D card isn't up to much, and you want a complete graphics upgrade, the 2D/3D combined cards are a good choice. They've all got something to offer, but the best of the combination bunch has to be the STB Velocity 128 3D, as it's quick at both 2D and 3D work.

As far as software support goes, one chipset currently has far more native support than all the others, and that's 3Dfx. While Direct3D on a decent card is much better than no support at all, native games are faster and usually better-looking. If you want the cheapest 3Dfx support, the Maxi Gamer 3D is the card to buy, although you should be able to get an Orchid Righteous 3D or Diamond Monster 3D for nearly the same price.

However, there's one card that goes one better than this. The miroHISCORE 3D's extra texture RAM gives even better performance than the other 3Dfx cards, while its TV output means that you don't need a 17inch monitor for big-screen action. If you want to be able to play just about every accelerated game on the market as fast as possible, the HISCORE 3D is as good as it gets.

The PowerVR cards might not have as much native support as 3Dfx, but support is growing. They also do a good job with Direct3D, especially on faster PCs, and they're very cheap. Incidentally, if you're wondering why the scores are generally fairly high in all the chipset groups, it's because there are truckloads of 3D cards out there and we've only reviewed the very best in this group test. We're clever like that.

Where do we go from here?

Both the Voodoo and PowerVR chipsets are getting a bit long in the tooth, and if you're a techno-junky, you might want to wait a couple of months before shelling out on a new card. VideoLogic and NEC plan a new 3D chipset to replace PowerVR, and have been working hard with Microsoft to ensure that it will offer top 3D acceleration under DirectX 6, due out early this year. They claim the new chipset will be several times faster than the PowerVR, taking a lot more work from the computer's CPU, so even slower PCs will reap the benefits.

3Dfx have also been busy, and their new chipset is due out soon. Early indications are that Voodoo 2 will be at least twice as fast, will work at higher resolutions, and will work with existing 3Dfx games. What's more, gits will be able to fit two cards in their machines for even more performance. We'll be reviewing these new chipsets in the next issue or two. This time next year, you'll never see a game in an arcade again.

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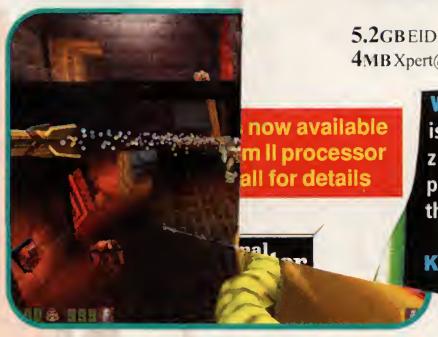
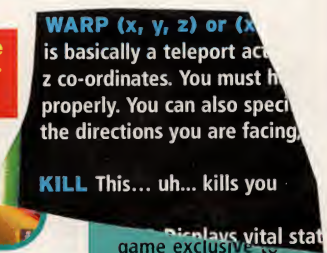
You've read the reviews, but what you really want to know is which card is best for you, which is why we've compiled this handy table. We've tested six games with as many of the cards as possible, on PCs with three CPUs – a P133, P166MMX and P200MMX – and awarded each a rating out of ten, based on performance. Pick the game across the top, move down to the card and read the score for the game and CPU. Note that the scores are judged on how well the card performed compared to other 3D cards – all the cards easily outperformed the unaccelerated versions.

NOTE: All tests were carried out on a machine with 32Mb of RAM at a resolution of 640x480.





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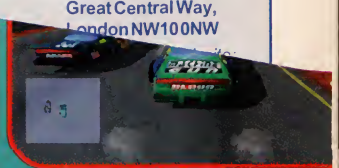
Five essential 3D games

Some games use 3D cards more efficiently than others. Consequently, over the last year, the wow factor in certain games has impressed us more than in others. We thought really, really hard for ages (about 20 seconds) about which accelerated games deserve a 'must have' tag stuck on them and came up with this reasonably definitive list.

QUAKE II

One of the reasons *QII*



NHL '98

This is easily the best ice hockey game on the PC – bar none. *NHL '98* boasts absolutely stunning visuals married to compelling and thoroughly addictive gameplay, and truly deserves a very special place in the homes of all 3D card-owning sports fans. Without a doubt worthy of its 'must-have' status.

ALPHA BLENDING

This is a technique used to create translucent objects – it's particularly useful for smoke, flames and water.

DIRECT3D

Direct3D (D3D) is Microsoft's extension to Windows 95 that enables any compatible game to work with cards with the right drivers. While all the cards on test here support D3D, you'll find that these games aren't as fast as those that have been written directly for a particular chipset. D3D is getting faster, though, and most 3D games support it.

OPENGL

Although OpenGL was originally designed for clever three-dimensional modelling applications, it's also been used to accelerate *Quake* as well as other games that have been designed to use the *Quake* engine. Although OpenGL is quicker than Direct3D, it's not as fast as native support.

AGP

Intel's Accelerated Graphics Port comes with most Pentium motherboards, and the main benefit at the moment is that graphics cards will be able to access your PC's RAM directly for holding textures.

Home and Internet PCs

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MMX Software Bundle

*ATi 3D Charger Graphics Card includes two 3D Games (Wipeout & Assault Rigs)

Gamer 3D	P166 P200	8 10	P166 P200					
miroHISCORE 3D	P133 P166 P200	6 8 10	P133 P166 P200					
Hercules Stingray 128	P133 P166 P200	6 8 10	P133 P166 P200					
VideoLogic Apocalypse 3Dx	P133 P166 P200	5 7 8	P133 P166 P200	6 7 9	P133 P166 P200			
VideoLogic 5D Sonic	P133 P166 P200	5 7 8	P133 P166 P200	6 7 9	P133 P166 P200			
Matrox m3D	P133 P166 P200	5 7 8	P133 P166 P200	6 7 9	P133 P166 P200			
ATi Xpert@play	P133 P166 P200	6 8 10	P133 P166 P200	7 9 10	Not support			
STB Velocity 128	P133 P166 P200	6 9 10	P133 P166 P200	7 9 10	P133 P166 P200			
Diamond Viper 330	P133 P166 P200	7 9 10	P133 P166 P200	6 8	P133 P166			

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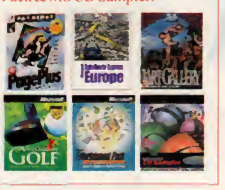

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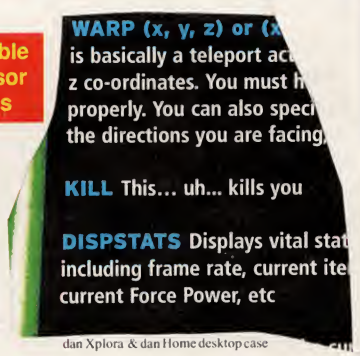

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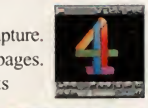

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EVERYTHING YOU WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT JEDI KNIGHT: DARK FORCES II BUT WERE TOO AFRAID TO ASK...

We wouldn't hand out a *PC Zone* Special Award without good reason. *Jedi Knight* is a truly excellent game, certainly one of the best this year. John Davison uses an old Jedi mind trick to bring you all of the things you really should know to get through things faster.

Do not underestimate the powers of the Force. Or your lightsaber.

WHEN WE WERE WORKING ON THE *PC ZONE* Awards last month, we decided that of all the games released in the last year, there was one that deserved our 'Special Award' and that was *Jedi Knight*. Without a doubt one of the finest first-person perspective shooters released in the last few years, it's not only a damn fine looking game, it's also extremely tough.

The next few pages outline some of the really important snippets of information that we've picked up over the last few months. Just about everyone here has finished the game and they all have their own views on what's important... but there are two particularly 'special' parts of the game that you need to master, namely Force Powers and lightsaber duelling. Many of the battles you get into (especially towards the end of the game) will require mastery of both of these factors.

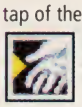
Part of the beauty of *Jedi Knight* is the design of the levels and the way that the story unfolds, so rather than ruining all of the surprises for you, we just thought we'd tutor you... like Yoda. Hmmm. No patience have you? Jedi will you not be. Or something like that.

Remember... use your lightsaber whenever you can, use your lightsaber whenever you can, use your lightsaber whenever you can. Got that? Good.

Learn to use combinations of Force powers as much as you can. You'll find that mixing offensive and defensive powers can help you fend off the bad guys more efficiently.

Force powers

Force Jump This power allows you to access areas which are otherwise unreachable, as well as enabling you to reach your goals that much quicker. A chasm is no longer an obstacle, merely an annoyance, and items stored high above will be reachable. Why bother with a bridge or an elevator when you have the means to get there faster? A well-timed jump can also mean the difference between life and death. Explosions and projectiles can be avoided, and you'll now find it easier to get out of any sticky situations. A quick tap of the key will produce the highest jump.



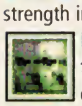
Force Pull A quick tweak of the Force can pull items to you. Distant weapons can be plucked away before others can reach them and you can also disarm an opponent before he can attack. To use the power, fix the object in your sight and hold down the key for a few seconds. The object should glow slightly and then make its way towards you. It takes some practice to perfect, and beginners will find that objects which are too far away will either stay where they are or they'll float in unintended directions.

Force Seeing With the Force you can stretch out with your senses to detect weapons, enemies and concealed doors and rooms. Using any map (2D or 3D) you can pinpoint the locations of what you really need to find. The extent of your vision depends on your strength with the Force. An apprentice may only pick out a few nearby enemies, while a Master or Lord can pinpoint every item/enemy across the map. This power remains in use for several seconds after activation.

Nobble anything that gets in your way with the lightsaber – it will help you increase your Force powers more quickly.

Light Side powers

Healing A quick zing of the Force will restore any health you've lost in combat. The amount of health you regain will depend on your experience and strength in the Force.



Persuasion "Fool... he's using an old Jedi mind trick." Very, very handy – this will convince your opponents that you're not really there, in effect rendering you invisible. This power will work on all but the strongest of wills. As you continue to persuade your Force energy will drain. This is a good Force skill to use in combination with others.

Blinding While not as long lasting as Persuasion, Blinding will still remove you from your enemies' sight. Any opponent is rendered blind by the light for several seconds after use, allowing you enough time to escape or, if there are no alternatives, to end the conflict quickly. Try a combination of Blinding followed by Persuasion and watch the ensuing confusion.

Absorb This power renders any Force-based attack by an opponent useless. A bit like the Empathy shield in *Quake: Scourge Of Armagon,* it's converted into additional Force energy for you to use. This power only works for a limited time, but sequential uses can provide for ▶

Cheat codes

JEDIWANNABE (on/off) The invulnerability cheat code toggle (you'll need to reactivate it whenever you advance a level). Bear in mind that it doesn't make you invulnerable to falls or from health-hurting actions, such as using the Force Jump in a cramped space

RED5 Gives you all the weapons with full ammo

5858LVR Gives you the whole map. Toggle the in-game map by hitting TAB or push ESC for the 3D one

BACTAME Gives you full health

DEEZNUTS Increases experience points

ERIAMJH (on/off) Enables fly mode so that you can jump and stay up for further distances

IMAYODA Gives you all the Light Side Force powers (you may need to use DEEZNUTS to use some of them). You may have to re-enable this each time you advance a level

RACCOONKING Gives you all of the Force powers

SITHLORD Gives you all the Dark Side powers

SLOWMO (on/off) Enables slow motion. This will stay with you for the entire game, so if you're about to face a Dark Jedi, be warned that the game goes through the fly-by in slow-mo' too

THEREISNOTRY Skips to the next level/mission

WAMPRAT Gives you all the items for the current level

WHITEFLAG (on/off) Disables enemy AI, so you can walk around safely

YODAJAMMIES Gives you full Force Mana

PINOTNOIR (x) Skips to x level, where x is an integer. Use only one through eight for the first CD and nine through 21 for the second one – get it wrong and the game will almost certainly crash

HYPER (x) Cycles through player starts for multi-player and single-player levels. Again, x is an integer

COORDS Gives you your six current co-ordinates with x, y, z and the direction you are facing as well as the sector you are in. Very handy when combined with the following...

WARP (x, y, z) or (x, y, z, a, b, c) The warp command is basically a teleport action where you can specify x, y and z co-ordinates. You must have x, y and z for this to work properly. You can also specify a, b and c where these are the directions you are facing, height, etc

KILL This... uh... kills you

DISPSTATS Displays vital stats about you, the player, including frame rate, current item, amount of Force and current Force Power, etc

FRAMERATE Gives you the current frame rate. One for the spods this

TEAM (x) This allows team in multi-player mode (and is only for multi-player mode). X is the number of the team you want to join. This is only useful in Jedi training levels. The respective numbers and colours are 1 = red, 2 = yellow, 3 = blue and 4 = green

ENDLEVEL Useful in multi-player levels to end the current level without ending the game. You must uncheck the 'single level only' option – if you don't and you have only one level, you'll kill the game anyway

KICK (x) Kicking is only available in multi-player games on the host. X is a valid player name – using this cheat code kicks him out of the game

I've got a bad feeling about this. Run in, hit them, run back. Repeat until both of them are well and truly dead.

themselves – as attacks are deflected and converted, your opponent is drained of his energy while yours is restored.

Protection You can use the Force to create an energy shield around you to deflect almost all attacks, Force-based or otherwise. Your enemies won't have any power over you, leaving you free to go about your business. This power is only available to the Jedi Lord.

Dark Side powers

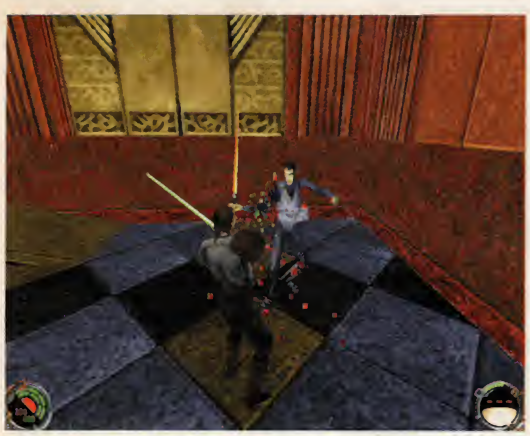
Force Throw The Dark Jedi are known to take hold of objects around them and hurl them toward opponents using telekinesis (like the bit at the end of *Empire*). Small boxes are the most frequent targets of this power. Absorb will not work as a defence against this since the damage is caused by the object, not the Force. Protection will shield you, and Force Speed or Force Jump can allow you to dodge the projectiles.

The Grip Darth Vader's favourite neck-mangler. If you want to escape from another player who's using it, Absorb will counter it. A good tactic is to Absorb and then Persuade if you want to get away quickly.

Lightning The Lightning acts like other energy weapons and has pretty much the same effect. Lightning will seek you out and, like its namesake, moves at the speed of light. Only a fast shield of Protection or Absorb can save you from this attack.

Destruction A Dark Jedi can summon the Force and form a projectile of er... Force stuff. It explodes when it contacts anything, and pushes away any of the debris that wasn't destroyed. Absorb will shield you from the explosion itself but any fragments of debris are still dangerous unless you use Protection.

Deadly Sight Rare... and only known to powerful Dark Jedi.



Your powers are weak, old man. Combinations of different Force Powers are most useful in lightsaber duels.

Lightsaber basics

Effective use of your lightsaber is vital for developing your Force skills. As you move further into the game, you'll find that lightsaber usage becomes more and more important. Try and use it whenever you can – it's a sure-fire way of developing your character into a full-on über-Jedi.

When you first use the lightsaber you'll probably tend to wade in, repeatedly clicking the mouse button and then watching to see what happens – there is, however, a strategy to duelling, so try and get the hang of the following tips:

- A good early strategy is to run at your opponent while attacking: you'll hit him straight on, and he'll either block or take a fairly substantial hit. Strafe left or right, which almost always results in another hit. Another good strategy is to block your opponent's hit, then quickly attack after he's finished his double attack. Remember to always face your opponent so you can block effectively.
- First, you can attack while running forward to lay in there with a quick three-swipe attack, or sidestep while attacking to do a sideways chop. If you move backwards while lashing out you'll perform an uppercut swing. You should already know that the lightsaber can block and deflect blaster shots, repeater shots and other lightsaber attacks... because it does this pretty much automatically. Lightsaber blocks will only work when your opponent is standing in the space between the crosshair and your lightsaber.
- There's a lot to be said for the foetal position... no, really. If you're taking some punishment and can't escape (a good way to prolong the agony is to crouch with the lightsaber and look up), adopting this stance makes you a much smaller target to hit, and the lightsaber will cover a larger area of your body.
- If an enemy is attacking from above or below, you'll have to look up or down to block the strike. Although the distance between you and your opponent doesn't make a difference to your ability to block, the closer you are the easier it is to hit him with his own deflected fire (like the bit in *Return Of The Jedi* out in the Dune Sea – although in the game it all happens very quickly and is difficult to predict).
- The lightsaber can't block the concussion rifle bolt nor is it the best at stopping the rail detonator. If you see a bad guy pulling out one of these weapons it's probably best to run away, unless you have Force Speed – if you do you can quickly get behind him for a few slashes, circling him until he's through.
- The best way to stay alive in a lightsaber duel is to use your Force Powers. While the powers employed will differ slightly depending on which side of the Force you choose, the basic premise is the same: put your enemy off balance, protect yourself and then go in for the quickest possible kill.

Every 126 seconds a person goes missing.

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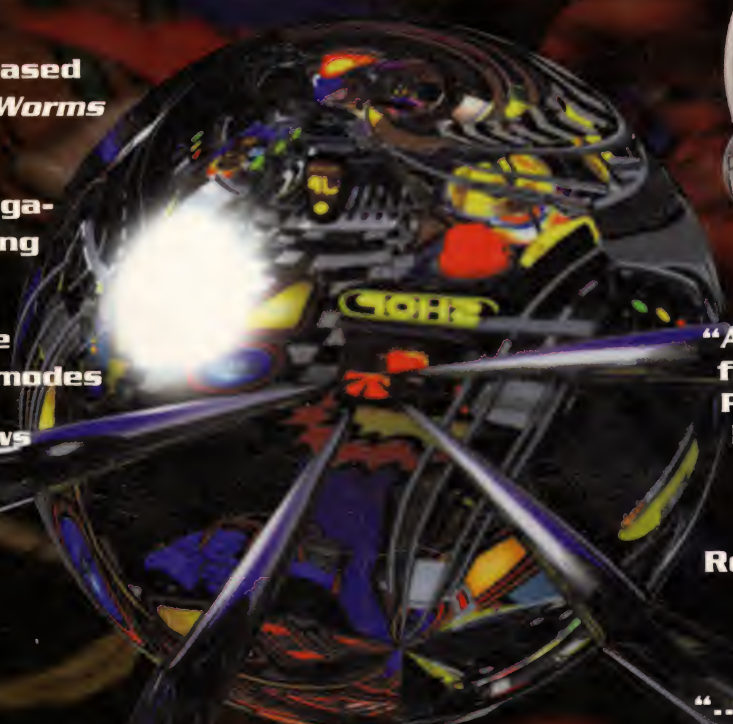

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EVERYTHING YOU WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT AGE OF EMPIRES BUT WERE TOO AFRAID TO ASK...

Andrew Wright has always been a bit of a Neanderthal, so he's the ideal man to show you how to build an ancient empire - and hold it together.

AGE OF EMPIRES IS *WARCRAFT* with a bit of *Civ* thrown in, so most of the strategies that work in *Warcraft* apply equally well to *Empires*. The big difference is that you've got 12 tribes, each with different combinations of military units. Multi-player mode really is the bollocks, but before you leap in, you've got to get past a game AI that can demolish you in double-quick time by building and making decisions far faster than you. Fortunately, you've got three secret weapons: pause, save and slow down. Use pause to check your tree charts, save game in case you get slaughtered early on, and the game speed (+/-) buttons when you're in a scrap to reduce the AI's advantage.

Get rich quick

The key to *AOE* is build, build, build. Learn the keyboard shortcuts and use them all the time. For example, hit H then C to build a villager. Then build another and another... To create multiple buildings of the same type, hold down the shift key. It works on town centres too, if you happen to, ahem, accidentally destroy your own.

The most important resources are wood, food, gold and stone in that order. At the start, you mainly need wood and food, but by the time you reach the Bronze Age, you'll need a steady supply of gold too. Wood is always necessary for creating buildings, ships, siege weapons and some military units; stone is only needed for towers and walls.

Aim to grab your resources quickly but methodically. Start harvesting the area around your base immediately then explore further afield. As soon as you discover resources further away, switch production to these if you can. Just remember to protect the villagers, and station spare military units near any resources like gold or stone that you aren't yet mining. Build a storage pit next to each resource – the less time it takes the villagers to walk between source and storage, the better.

Animals are the most efficient source of food because hunting them uses no resources. Employ your spare villagers and military units to herd the animals towards storage pits. Berries are next best; farms are the least efficient as they always cost you wood.

Get as rich as you can as quickly as you can but don't upgrade too early. Aim to have at least 12 villagers, ideally 16-20, before your empire enters the Tool Age.

How to win territory - and keep it

Put four stables together and create four elephants much more quickly.

- Don't bottle yourself in. You'll need to expand into – or dominate – at least a quarter of any map to be in a position to win. Besides, a well-spread settlement isn't such an easy target.
- If the 50-unit limit is a problem, select useless units and press delete. Or when you get 49, build a dozen or more different ones at once and you'll beat the limit.
- Remember, you can have as many towers as you want, so use them. Just don't forget to keep mining stone.
- Construct several stables or academies close together. That way you can churn out three or four decent units at a time.
- Don't site buildings close together – leave 'motorways' through your base in each direction to stop moving units getting tangled up (*AOE*'s individual unit AI routines are crap).

(Below) Handy storage pits allow resources to be gathered at a much faster rate.
(Below right) Herd the deer close to your storage pit or town centre.

General tips

In the Tool Age, start mining stone and gold, and build towers and walls. Build a barracks and deploy some clubmen to defend yourself. It's a good idea to send some out to scout the area and kill any wandering lions. Keep churning out villagers and increase wood and food production as much as possible. Build a stable and get one or two scouts out there as soon as you possibly can to explore and harass. Add an archery range and get youself some archers too. On a map with water, ships should be a high priority, so build a port.

Study your tribe's chart thoroughly and decide which units you'll want. Siege weapons are excellent for attack; horse and elephant archers are brilliant, especially for defending weaker units. Cavalry are powerful in attack and defence, especially the heavies. They're your best hope against the siege stuff, too.

Academy units like hoplites, phalanxes and legions should be the mainstay of your infantry, with archers to back them up. Improved and composite bowmen are cheap and effective.

The best attacking army is probably four to six siege weapons, protected by academy infantry and a couple of elephant archers to soak up punishment. A group of heavy cavalry on top will let you cause havoc among villagers and counter almost anything the enemy can throw at you.

Chariots are ideal for hunting down troublesome priests. For some real damage, deploy a squad of war elephants. Keep some priests at the rear for healing your own troops and converting enemy units, along with a few villagers, who can build near your opponent's camp and churn out reinforcements.

If you manage to get that little lot in the right place, virtually nothing can stop you!

Elephants are the toughest, meanest critters in the game – the flesh-and-hide equivalent of a Tiger tank. All you can do is gang up on them.

A typical multi-player tactic, this: roaming bands of siege weapons are used in Internet games without any protective support. You need to be on your toes and have some fast-moving cavalry handy. This bunch has taken out a goldmine protected by several units and three or four towers.

Tribal gathering

Each tribe has specific strengths and weaknesses, so make sure you choose the right one for the map you're playing and the strategy you enjoy best.

Assyrian
Nicely-balanced in attack and defence. Strong early on.
Strengths Cavalry, horse/chariot archers, siege weapons, triremes
Best units Chariot archers
Weakness No elephants
Best maps Any (but land is best)

Babylonian
Weak outside their walls but hellish hard to dig out.
Strengths Fortifications
Best units Catapults and chariots are your only hope...
Weakness No elephants, heavy cavalry or triremes
Best maps Land only

Choson
Weakest of the 12 – the best strategy is to build a cavalry horde.
Strengths Cataphracts, triremes
Best units Cataphracts or legions
Weakness No elephants, chariots or catapults
Best maps Any (but island is best)

Egyptian
Hold their own in battle and good for priest attacks.
Strengths Priests, chariots and ships
Best units Groups of priests can drive your enemies mad!
Weakness Infantry and cavalry
Best maps Island/coastal

Greek
Weak early on and only good when used defensively afterwards.
Strengths Heavy infantry, siege weapons, ships
Best units Academy units are fast and dependable
Weakness No archers, elephants, chariots
Best maps Any (but island is best)

Hittite
The best aggressors on land, with great artillery.
Strengths Heavy infantry and elephants
Best units Chariot and horse archers
Weakness No ballistas or triremes
Best maps Land only

Minoan
Powerful afloat, hard to attack and a liability in defence.
Strengths Heavy infantry, siege weapons, ships
Best units Composite bowmen – that +2 range is devastating
Weakness No elephants, chariots or towers
Best maps Any

Persian
Best all-round aggressors, with superb sea power.
Strengths Archers, elephants, cavalry and ships
Best units Heavy horse archers.
Weakness No chariots, weak on siege weapons and infantry
Best maps Any (but island is best)

Phoenician
Good all-rounders apart from lack of heavy artillery.
Strengths Infantry, archers, elephants and ships
Best units Triremes and war elephants are your best chance
Weakness No siege weapons
Best maps Island only

Shang
Shang can be the dark horses – you can really churn out villagers early on and build some pretty impressive walls.
Strengths Balanced land forces
Best units Heavy cavalry and lots of ranged units
Weakness No elephants, weak ships
Best maps Land only

Sumerian
Best all-rounders, full stop. If in doubt, try them.
Strengths Tough villagers, heavy infantry
Best units Catapults – they're unstoppable in big groups
Weakness No cavalry
Best maps Any (but land is best)

Yamato
Hopeless in set-piece attacks but wonderful for raiding.
Strengths Heavy infantry and cavalry, good ships
Best units Triremes and juggernauts
Weakness No elephants, chariots, siege weapons or towers
Best maps Island only

Cheats

Type the following at the chat line:
REVEAL MAP Reveals the whole map
NO FOG Removes the fog of war
PEPPERONI PIZZA Gives you 1000 food units
COINAGE Gives you 1000 gold units
WOODSTOCK Gives you 1000 wood units
QUARRY Gives you 1000 stone units

Try these for a laugh:
BIGDADDY (one for car lovers), **STEROIDS** (get all units and upgrades), **PHOTON MAN** (creates a cool bloke with a laser rifle) and **GAIA** (gives you control over animals and birds).

Fighting fit...

Concentrate units on single objectives for maximum effect.

• Group your troops into units, selected with the number keys. Put your infantry into one group, your archers into another and so on. This makes it easy to send cavalry after catapults, catapults after buildings and so on, instead of facing a confused melee you can't control.

That tower won't last long...

• Don't mix slow and fast units in the same group. Some mixed types can work well, though – a few horse archers mixed in with your heavy cavalry gives them extra firepower.
• Try to put priests in groups of one so you can send them straight into action. It's a complete waste to have six priests converting the same enemy unit.
• Use the high ground. The 25 per cent chance of triple damage is a big boost to archery and siege units.
• Concentrate your firepower – target multiple units and kill them one by one. Two infantry units versus a tower is suicide, but ten swordsmen can bring it down with minimal losses.

...Kicking ass...

Ships have the best artillery in the game – use them against land targets.

• Can't get through the trees? Flatten them with heavy catapult area fire. This is also a great technique for nuking your opponent's wood resources. Hee hee.
• Attack from two or three different directions in quick succession – that way the defenders spend all their time moving back and forward.
• Remember, a good scout is a dead scout. Always precede attack groups with one or two so you know what you're running into.
• Triremes (all kinds) are excellent for bombardment. They're quick and can't be clobbered in hand-to-hand combat.
• Use walls, towers and ranged weapons to set up a solid, semi-automatic defence so you can concentrate on building and attacking.

A scout can see much further than a chariot.

The more obstacles you put in an opponent's way the better. Use walls to funnel attacking infantry and cavalry into kill zones from which they can't escape.

...And, er, curling up in a corner

• The computer will come after you very early, trying to wipe out undefended villagers. Always protect them – either with military units, towers or walls.
• Take out attacking catapults first – they do more damage to your base than anything else. Combined cavalry and infantry are the best way to deal with siege weapons.
• Double or triple walls work well but you still need defence in depth. Siting towers near your town centre is vital.
• Don't be afraid to delete a couple of wall units when you need to exit in a hurry.
• Funnel attackers into kill zones with diagonal walls and more towers closer to the main entrance to your base.

TROUBLESHOOTER CHEATS!!!

Can't hack it in *Hexen II*? Cwap at *Quake*? Regularly twatted in *Tomb Raider II*? Still got the skid-marks from *Test Drive IV*? Richie Shoemaker has all the cheat codes you need to restore your self-dignity.

BLOOD (Monolith/Eidos)

While playing *Blood*, press T, then type in a cheat code and press Enter.

Bunz	All weapons (dual) and ammo
Capinmyass	God mode
Clarice	100 health
Edmark	Hurt yourself
eva galli	Toggle clipping mode
fork broussard	1 health, no weapons and surreal
funky shoes	Super jump
Goonies	Shows entire map
Griswold	Full armour
Hongkong	All weapons and unlimited ammo
Idaho	All weapons and full ammunition
Jojo	Drunk mode
Kevorkian	Kill yourself
Keymaster	All keys
Krueger	Self-immolation
Mario	Level warp
Montana	All inventory items
Mpkfa	God mode
Nocapinmyass	Disables God mode
Rate	Displays frame rate
Spork	200 health
Sterno	Fades in from a black screen
Tequila	Dual weapons
Voorhees	Short God mode

AGE OF EMPIRES (Microsoft)

Press Enter and then type in any of the following cheats:

DIEDIEDIE	You all die
RESIGN	You resign
REVEAL MAP	Reveals all the map
PEPPERONI PIZZA	Gives 1000 food
COINAGE	Gives 1000 gold
WOODSTOCK	Gives 1000 wood
QUARRY	Gives 1000 stone
NO FOG	Clears fog of war
HARI KARI	Suicide

EXTREME ASSAULT (Blue Byte)

From the *Extreme Assault* main menu, type 'levelx' and then press space. If that doesn't work, type 'oh dear' instead, at the main menu. Then use the following cheats in the game:

Alt 0	Speed
Alt 1	Full ammunition
Alt 2	Upgrades weapons
Alt 3	Restores energy
Alt 4	God mode
Alt 6	Ends mission
Alt 7	Deactivates enemies
Alt 8	Helicopter
Alt 9	Tank

HEXEN II (Raven/Activision)

Press ` to bring down the console then type in these codes:

changelevel X	Changes level (X=level name)
chase_active 1	Third-person view
give 2	Weapon number 2
give 3	Weapon number 3
give 4	Weapon number 4
give h ###	### (eg 999) health
God	God mode
impulse 9	All weapons and mana
impulse 14	Sheep
impulse 23	Torch
impulse 25	Tome of Power
impulse 39	Fly mode
impulse 40	Level up
impulse 43	All weapons, mana and items
impulse 299	20 of each artifact
name X	Changes your name (X)
noclip	No clipping mode
sv_gravity ##	Adjusts gravity to number ##
Notarget	Toggles invisible
Restart	Restarts the level

IGNITION (VIE)

Type in these cheat codes at the *Ignition* menu screen:

Banarne	Increases the height of the cars
Filmjolk	Screen flipping
Skunk	Removes the coachwork
Slasktratt	All the cars
Strings	Flattens all opponent cars
Surmule	All the tracks
Svinpole	Drops the camera viewpoint

NBA LIVE '98 (EA Sports)

In the main screen, click on Rosters, then click on Create Custom Team. Enter one of the following names for your custom team to access the secret teams which are made up of the entire *NBA Live 98* production crew.

EA Europals
Hitmen AllSorts
Hitmen Coders
Hitmen Earplugs
Hitmen Idlers
Hitmen Pixels
QA Campers
QA DBuggers
QA Testtubes
TNT Blasters

MAGESLAYER (Raven/GT Interactive)

Press ` to bring down the console then type these codes:

Bigfinale	Plays ending sequence
Fly	Fly mode
impulse 11	God mode
impulse 42	Technically an easter egg – try it and see
Noclip	No clipping mode
ode to jack	Kills all enemies on level

NHL '98 (EA Sports)

Type in these codes *during* the game:

MANTIS	Gives players elongated arms, legs and necks
NHLKIDS	Makes players kidsize
HOMEGOAL	Gives home team a goal
AWAYGOAL	Gives away team a goal
PENALTY	Causes a penalty
INJURY	Causes an injury
ZAMBO	Puts zamboni on the ice
VICTORY	Starts fireworks over rink
FLASH	Camera flashes from stands
SPOTS	Turns on the pre-game spotlights
CHECK	Every player body checks an opposing player to the ice upon contact

Disclaimer

We would like to make it absolutely clear that if you decide to use these cheats, you do so at your own risk. If you experience problems which you suspect may have arisen as a result of using these cheats (your PC blows up or starts doing really strange things), much as we sympathise we cannot and will not be held responsible.

GRAB	Similar to CHECK but with a stick hold instead of a check

Type in these codes while the credits menu is highlighted:

STANLEY	Plays end of season video
EAEAO	Gives you EA Blades team

SHADOW WARRIOR

(3D Realms/Eidos)

While playing *Shadow Warrior*, first press T, then type in the cheat code and press Enter.

Swchan	God mode
Swghost	No clipping mode
Swgimme	All inventory items
Swgreed	God mode, all items and ammo
Swloc	Displays frame rate
Swmap	Full map on/off
Swname	Change name in multi-player mode
Swquit	Quits the game
Swres	Changes screen resolution
Swstart	Restarts level
SwtrekXX	Jumps to level number XX
Swtrix	Bunny Rocket mode
Winpachinko	Win at the Pachinko machines

TOTAL ANNIHILATION

(Cavedog/GT Interactive)

Press Enter for the message box and then type any of the following cheat codes into it:

+atm	1000 metal and energy
+cdstart	Starts CD music
+contour #	Shows 3D contour #1-15
+dither	Dithering instead of fog of war
+doubleshot	All weapons do twice the damage
+halfshot	All weapons do half the damage
+ilose	You lose
+iwin	You win
+noenergy	Drops energy to 0
+nometal	Drops metal to 0
+noshake	Disables screen shakes
+nowisee	Full map and disables fog of war
+sing	Makes units sing when given orders
+radar	100% radar coverage
+switchalt	Switch squads with Alt+# keys
+view#	View # player's metal and energy

TEST DRIVE IV (Electronic Arts)

Save the game in slot 10 and give it any of the names of the cheat codes listed below. Several codes can be used together. In multi-player games, make sure everyone uses the same codes, or expect much strangeness...

Aardvark	Disables collisions
Bandw	Black and white mode
Birdview	Bird perspective view
Creditz	Shows credits
Gonzon	Fast-forward mode
Gonzoff	Turns off fast-forward mode
Itslate	No special effects
Levellla	Unlocks all tracks
Miktrout	Big cars
Mpalmer	Small cars
Noaicars	Disables computer players
Spazzy	Acid mode
Sraclla	Unlocks all cars
Stickier	Cars won't fly when crashing

TUROK (Acclaim)

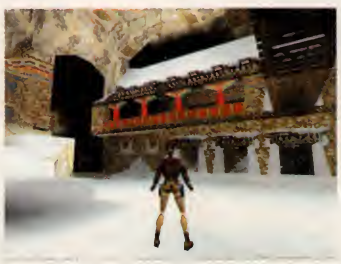
Enter these codes from the main menu by selecting the Enter Cheat option.

Bkstrd	Fly mode
Dddnstbr	God mode
Dnlddck	Quack mode
Fhgtbc	Shows enemies
Gnntrtmnt	Full map
Grgmlchck	T-Rex warp
Jffspngdnbrg	Unlimited lives
Jhnnck	Disco mode
Jhnthms	Longhunter warp
Jsncrpntr	Tiny enemies
Lnjhnsn	Unlimited ammunition
Ndnlp	Spirit mode
Nglckck	All keys
Nglckck	All keys
Rbchn	Big heads
Rntrc	Campaigner warp
Shntrrnt	Gallery
Stphnbrml	Mantis warp
Thmscls	All weapons
Thtrtmbb	Shows credits
Mttstbbngtnb	Level 1
Drrnstbbngtn	Level 2
Mkjnk	Level 3
Ptndncn	Level 4
Nntnd	Level 5
Trmnn	Level 6
Jmdnn	Level 7
Mrgrttrr	Level 8

Men In Black (Gremlin)

During the game press ESC to get to the main menu and type DOUGMATIC several times until you're taken back into the game. You are now in cheat mode. Press ESC and type the following:

Giveme	All weapons
Agentj, agentk, agentl	Swap between agents



Tomb Raider II (Core/Eidos)

To skip levels, press / to give Lara a flare, press shift and walk one step forward followed by a step back. Rotate in three full circles (still pressing shift) and then press alt and jump forward. To access all weapons, do the same as above but Rotate in three full circles to the right and jump back (with alt).

Quake II (id/Activision)

Bring down the console as you would in *Quake* and type these commands to get weapons and items as described.

Give all
Give blaster
Give bullets
Give cells
Give grenades
Give grenadelauncher
Give invulnerability
Give jacketarmor
Give machinegun
Give mines
Give nuke
Give quad
Give rebreather
Give rockets
Give rocketlauncher
Give shells
Give shotgun
Give slugs
Give sshotgun
Give silencer
God
Noclip
notarget

Theme Hospital (Bullfrog/EA)

On the fax screen punch 24328 into the phone numeric keypad to access the cheat mode. Typing in 7287 will also take you to a special rat-shooting level after you complete your current level.

SHIFT C	Gain $10,000
CONTROL C	Completes all research
CONTROL M	End month
CONTROL Y	End year

UPRISING (Ubi Soft)

First press M, then type in the cheat codes.

Chump	Type 'chump' again for super chump mode
Dangerous	Full weapon arsenal
Tuff ass	Tuff arse mode
Dangerous Chump	Type while in chump mode
Tuff	Type while in chump mode
Dangerous Super chump	Type while in super chump mode

DOCTOR HELMUT WERSTLER'S CRUELTY ZOO

Guten tag! Doctor Helmut Werstler here, to tell you all about ein exciting new development in behavioural therapy that should be music to ze ears of every Daily Mail reader in ze nation. As a vully qualified zychiatrist, parents often zay to me, "Herr Doktor! Help! Mein children are addicted to ze violent videogames und I am concerned for zere mental well-being. All zat brutal imagery iz bound to affect zere little brains in zome vay - perhaps vun day zey may end up attacking zere fellow man, becoming muggers, football hooligans, or even Glaswegians! Perish ze thought!" Und you know vot? I zink zey may have ein point.

Zo, I put on mein thinking cap und studied ze problem extensively. I noticed zat many of ze finest, most respectable members of ze British zociety tended to eschew such violent digital games in favour of altogether more wholesome pursuits - such as fox-hunting. Ov course! By venting zere rage und frustration on dumb animals, zey keep zemselves emotionally ztable! Zo, here is ze next logical ztep - ze vorld's first Cruelty Zoo, designed especially vith ze little vuns in mind. Often ve find zat children are zo enchanted by ze joys of inhumane brutality perpetuated against innocent creatures, zey never look at a zingle computer game again! Just look at ze many attractions on offer...

The Aviary

Let your kids run riot amongst the birdcages, with a selection of the finest handguns money can buy. Owls, parakeets, toucans... you name it, it's here... but not for long! All our birds are nailed to their perches for your murderous satisfaction. Happy hunting!

Li'l Bleeders

It's not just the exotic or endangered species that deserve a kicking. There's the little rural beasties to consider too. Anyone who loves fox hunting will love our badger fork-pogo contests!

If that doesn't tickle your fancy, why not simply poke a stoat in the eye with a pen? Our staff will be happy to lend you one.

Monkey Mania

We've got loads of monkeys here at the Cruelty Zoo - and quite frankly, we don't like them. That's why we encourage the little ones to beat their brains out with hammers. Be sure to bring a change of clothing, mum!

... and there's more!

We simply don't have room to mention all the great things on offer at the Cruelty Zoo... but here's a little taster of just a few of the other attractions waiting for you!

Smack-a-Yak Boxing Ring
The Almighty Penguin Skewer
Orangutan Chainsaw Massacre
Chinchilla Rodeo
Live Dolphin Barbeque

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Tech ZONE

3D battle ends at long last

OVER THE LAST TWO issues we've spoken with Creative Labs and VideoLogic concerning their next generation of 3D graphic cards. Of course, there's another rather big player in the 3D arena, and it really wouldn't be fair to conclude this series of interviews without speaking to them.

Enter stage left 3Dfx with their side of the story, and an interesting story it is, too. Their rise to fame in the area of games hardware has almost been unprecedented, with many software publishers taking the first generation of 3Dfx technology to their hearts from the outset. Whether this will continue to be the case under the onslaught of VideoLogic's powerful new 3D technology remains to be seen, but for the time being at least, 3Dfx are leading the way.

Expect a full report on the new 3D cards on the way from both VideoLogic and 3Dfx in next month's Tech Zone.

Chris Anderson

Spotlight on 3Dfx

Having enjoyed runaway success with their first 3D card, 3Dfx are poised to increase their dominance of the market with Voodoo2. Chris Anderson talks to Andy Keane about the future of 3D.

This is the home of 3Dfx, who were virtually unknown in gaming circles a couple of years ago and have since shot to fame with their revolutionary 3D technology.

PCZ: Let's start with a little info on your good self.

ANDY KEANE: My name is Andy Keane, and I'm Vice President of Marketing at 3Dfx Interactive. I came from Silicon Graphics' MIPS subsidiary [where the Nintendo console was designed] a little over two years ago, so I've been around since very early on in 3Dfx's history. I was only peripherally involved with SGI's Nintendo project, but it did give me a chance to see how much fun game graphics could be. Before MIPS, I was an engineer at Intel and Philips.

PCZ: Why should our readers choose 3Dfx over any of the other 3D cards currently available?

AK: The reason why gamers buy a 3D graphics product is to play games, and 3Dfx is the most widely supported technology for games you can buy off-the-shelf today. The cards are very easy to install, even for non-technical users. Voodoo gives a significant boost to any system from a Pentium 90 upwards, so users don't necessarily need to upgrade their entire system to get improved performance.

Other technologies are being sold on promises of titles – some of these promises being more than six months old – or the fact that they are faster than Voodoo on the WinMark 98 benchmark. But the simple fact of the matter is that gamers don't play benchmarks. For GL*Quake*, Voodoo is faster. We

(Above left) PC flight sims in particular have received a much-needed graphical boost with the advent of 3D cards. (Above right) *Quake II* is one of the best-looking 3Dfx titles on the market.

Andy Keane is one of the top bods at 3Dfx, and he's not afraid to speak his mind – as this interview clearly shows!

offer many more titles, better visual quality and better compatibility. With Voodoo, you don't have to wait – the product and titles are here today.

PCZ: How do 3Dfx currently stand in terms of sales, software support and credibility (in the minds of PC gamers) compared to PowerVR, who appear to be your nearest rivals?

AK: PowerVR was a much bigger worry to the company seven months ago. Since E3 in Atlanta last summer and ECTS in London in the autumn, they've become much less of a concern to us. From the amount of support we've received from the development, journalist and consumer communities, I believe Voodoo Graphics has emerged as the de facto standard for 3D gaming. All the hottest titles are supported and the list just keeps growing. Although you can always find someone to point out the deficiencies in any technology, Voodoo is selling very well, based on its list of titles, its performance and its ease of installation.

Many companies are dedicating themselves solely to one accelerator or another – for instance, EA aren't supporting PowerVR – and we are very far ahead in that category. Voodoo is the first port of call for many games. Also, Voodoo runs very well on systems with a Pentium 90 or better. ▶

◀ PowerVR appears to need a more powerful host, such as a Pentium 200, to run well.

PCZ: What can we expect from 3Dfx's Voodoo2, and how do you think it will fare against the next offering from PowerVR ?

AK: Voodoo2, while designed to accelerate current titles, is really targeting the next generation of games, the stuff that's going to get you revved up next Christmas. We announced the technology now because we are distributing Voodoo2 boards to game developers. We didn't feel the technology could be kept under wraps any longer. Voodoo2 will have four times the triangles, and two to four times the fill rate. We'll be showing you this technology very soon.

PCZ: What's the latest on the pending lawsuits with Sega, NEC and VideoLogic? How badly will the loss of the Sega deal affect your credibility in the marketplace?

AK: Interestingly, the loss of the Sega deal may well end up being one of the best things that ever happened to 3Dfx as a company. This enabled us to refocus our resources onto the PC market.

PCZ: Why are you producing 3D cards at all – wouldn't it be easier to team up with a company like Intel and put your chipset on all their new motherboards?

AK: Products like Voodoo and Voodoo2 don't fit the typical cost model for an OEM-style product. An OEM product only needs to perform just well enough, it doesn't have to be spectacular at any particular feature – which is why they don't make great consumer products. Look at the current crop of OEM products shipping in the mainstream market: while a few SKUs ship with the latest technology, most SKUs ship with products that are one or two generations behind the latest technology. Voodoo and Voodoo2 are specifically designed for the retail or add-in board market.

That said, however, some Voodoo Graphics products have been included in OEM products from NEC, HP and Apricot in the UK, but these are specific machines designed for customers wanting a PC to play games on. By targeting retail, we can use more technology, more memory, and design the graphics specifically for this without worrying about OEM requirements that have nothing to do with playing games. Once a base of support has been built for the retail technology, this 3D technology can be migrated to an OEM-style product that is compatible with the retail product. Again, we can look at the PowerVR technology, which has already made one generation obsolete and is poised to have the same effect on another.

We're going for consumer value in different segments. In retail and upgrade, the consumer wants a product that improves their system and offers significant value. In the OEM product, the support needs to be seamless and integrated into the system. With our strategy, rather than waiting for ports to an OEM product, you have the library of games developed for retail from day one.

PCZ: What do you think the future holds for 3D technology in games?

AK: 3D is an incredibly complicated problem. Since we are trying to reproduce visual reality, the obvious benchmark is what your eye sees around you, outside the computer. Our goal is to allow the computer to act as a window for the new reality of each game. Our aim is to remove the graphics from something that is consciously recognised as graphics. We still have a long way to go.

It's not just the graphics, however. Game developers need to target their graphics and art at more sophisticated scenes, and new processors and buses are required for these new experiences. 3D graphics has a long future ahead of it.

PCZ: In your opinion, which game currently makes the most of 3Dfx technology? Have you seen any currently in development that are better?

AK: There are so many, it's hard to list them without waking up at 3am, slapping yourself in the head and saying: "Man, I can't believe that I forgot about...". We have seen several titles in development that we can't talk about due to non-disclosure agreements that look amazing. The second generation of 3D gaming will break in mid-1998, and if you don't have a 3Dfx card, you'll miss out.

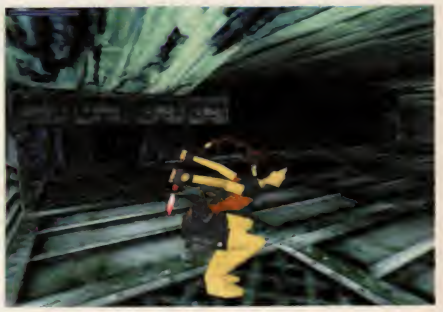
"The loss of the Sega deal may end up being one of the best things to ever happen to 3Dfx as a company."

PCZ: If the 3Dfx chipset came across the PowerVR chipset in a pub and started a fight, who would win and why?

AK: As the company to first deliver GL*Quake* to the world, I think we've got a little more experience with the business end of a nailgun.

Of course, you could always put our fans on one side of the room and theirs on the other for a classic, Western-style bar-room brawl, but one side of the room would be awfully lonely. We could even bring in our various board partners and once again, sheer numbers would make short work of the PowerVR crowd.

We're a young and scrappy company with a lot more to lose than PowerVR, since we don't have the backing of a tremendous Japanese conglomerate to continuously shower us with cash. But our technology and marketing kung fu skills are a mighty powerful combination.



(Above left) ***NHL Hockey*** **holds the accolade for grooviest-looking sports game under 3Dfx. (Above right) Speaking of grooves, Lara's curves are a lot smoother in** ***Tomb Raider II,*** **thanks to 3Dfx.**

Rage 3D vs Microsoft SideWinder

FOR THE LAST YEAR, Microsoft's SideWinder game pad has become the pad of choice in the *Zone* office. This has nothing to do with its sturdy build (although this helps), or even its guaranteed compatibility with most games (although this helps, too). The reason we love it so is the ability to daisy-chain them together for instant two- or four-player fun. We've never had another pad that has this feature and so we wholeheartedly recommended it to one and all.

Microsoft's SideWinder finally has some serious competition in the form of the Rage 3D.

But hang on a minute, here come ThrustMaster with a brand-new game pad and – lo and behold – you can daisy-chain them together. Without further ado, we linked two of them up, loaded up *Actua Soccer 2* and put them through their paces. The result? Er, to be honest there isn't really much to choose between the Rage and SideWinder. They're both game pads, they're both pretty good, but at £34.99 the Rage is cheaper (compared to £39.99 for the SideWinder).

If push comes to shove, we'd have to say the SideWinder has better build quality and the buttons feel a little sturdier, but if money's an issue, you won't be disappointed if you go for the Rage 3D.

Contact:
ThrustMaster 01276 609955
Microsoft 0345 002000

Access time blues

Having trouble with *Blade Runner*? Does your computer struggle with long FMV sequences? Dave Mathieson has the answer.

ONE OF THE WORST THINGS about having a low-spec PC is that games go all jerky. Usually this happens in 3D, and can be sorted by a 3D graphics card, but FMV (full-motion video) clips are also subject to these pauses. This is often down to your CD-ROM drive.

There are plenty of 16x and faster CD-ROM drives out there, but while the drives do spin quickly, this only helps with things like big video clips, where one big chunk of data is being read.

Most games and other software contain lots of smaller files, and the time spent actually reading them is pretty small – it's finding them that takes up time. This delay, known as access time, has remained pretty constant with CD-ROM drives, which has meant that there is little practical difference between a 4x and 12x. However, the Hitachi 8330 and Samsung SCR-2430 drives use a technology called CAV (Constant Angular Velocity) as opposed to CLV (Constant Linear Velocity) used in older drives. CAV means that the disc spins round at a constant speed, enabling higher speed drives to be made more easily. More importantly, CLV usually results in slower access times, as there's a time lag while waiting for the motor to change speeds.

Both these drives are 24x CAV models, which means they have decent access times for general speediness, as well as a fast spin speed for video. This also means that you'll get away with smaller installs of games sometimes, as there'll be less of a delay in running straight from the CD.

So if you're thinking of upgrading your CD-ROM drive, these are the two that *PC Zone* confidently recommend. There's little to choose between them in terms of performance, and at these prices they represent great value for money.

Hitachi 8330
Price: £70
Telephone: 01628 585000
95

Samsung SCR-2430
Price: £76
Telephone: 0181 391 0168
90

PC ZONE

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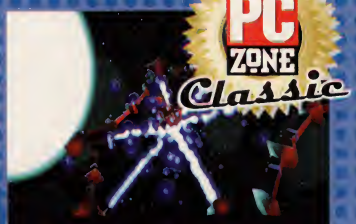


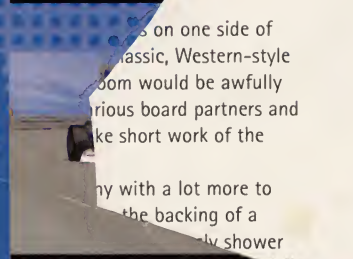
Darklight Conflict
SCORE 92

Fighters Anthology
SCORE 92

Dungeon Keeper
SCORE 96

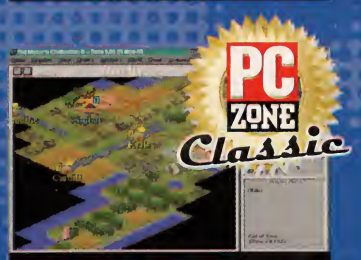
Apache Longbow 2
SCORE 92

Carmageddon
SCORE 95



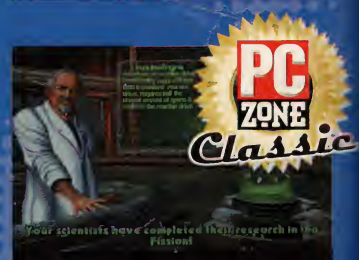
F1GP2 + GP Manager Pack
NOT REVIEWED

...athering



Civilization 2
SCORE 90

FIFA: Road To The World Cup
SEE REVIEW SECTION



Masters Of Orion 2 Double Pack
SCORE 92

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claim a bonus game and an extra issue

NFL Madden 97
SCORE 87

Star Trek: Generations
SCORE 72

NHL 98
SCORE 94

Syndicate Wars
SCORE 95

Privateer – The Darkening
SCORE 94

Theme Hospital & SimCity2000
NOT REVIEWED

Sid Meier's Gettysburg
SCORE 90

X – COM Apocalypse
SCORE 95

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PC ZONE

Recommended

Welcome to the *PC Zone* Recommended section. Here you'll find the cream of the games we've painstakingly reviewed and picked out over the years, plus those we feel should go down in PC gaming history as all-time Classics.

WELCOME TO THE PC ZONE RECOMMENDS section. It is here that you will find, what are, in our considered opinion, the very best games ever released for the PC.

In an effort to keep it simple, we've spilt it up into genres: Action games, Sports simulations, Adventure games, Flight simulations, Driving games, Role-playing games and Strategy games.

The top ten games of each genre are then listed, with a brief summary of the game, review score, publisher and contact number. Most of the games listed here were awarded *PC Zone* Classic status (90 per cent and above), and some managed a *PC Zone* Recommended award (80 per cent and above) at the time that they were reviewed. To achieve the highest accolade, a game must not only be very playable, entertaining and offer long-term appeal, but it must also be original and/or offer something new and worthwhile to the genre. To this end, we've included some sequels, which although scored lower than the original title, are deemed better games (they didn't get a higher score 'cos it had already been done and therefore they weren't exactly bursting with originality – okay?), so this guide isn't a list of the highest scoring games ever reviewed by *PC Zone*, but a guide to the best games now available.

When you're reading the reviews in the rest of the magazine, please remember to bear this section in mind. The highest scoring game is supposed to represent a benchmark in a particular genre, and we will always be comparing new games with this, in accordance with the above criteria. As a result, you will see games dropping out of this section as new and better titles are released, so keep your eyes peeled for new entries in each of the genres.

Jeremy Wells, Editor

Action

QUAKE II (97)

The sequel to "the most important PC game ever" turns out to be more than worth the wait. Despite the odd bit of slowdown, single-player and deathmatch games are in a league of their own. As Macca concluded in his review: "*Quake II* is pretty much perfect." Buy it now.

Publisher:
Activision (01895 456700)

TOMB RAIDER II (94)

The first game broke the mould, but the sequel even improves on the original. *Tomb Raider II* sports a curvier Lara, massive new levels to explore and a tidier control system. The game comes with native 3Dfx support and looks better than ever.

Publisher:
Core/Eidos (0181 636 3000)

JEDI KNIGHT: DARK FORCES II (94)

It's not *Quake*, but then it doesn't even try to be. But it is a compelling, technically superb blend of action and exploration wrapped up in the *Star Wars* universe. Altogether most impressive.

Publisher:
LucasArts/VIE (0171 368 2255)

HEXEN II (94)

The long-awaited, hub-based gib-fest sweeps into action with its trusty sword, hoping to carve a big 'H' on the chest of its older cousin, *Quake*. This is a first-person hack 'em off with balls as well as a big chopper.

Publisher:
Activision (01895 456700)

FADE TO BLACK (94)

The unofficial sequel to the excellent *Flashback*, this is a near-perfect blend of third-person exploration and combat action. The technical precursor to the fantastic *Tomb Raider*, it's a classic in its own right.

Publisher:
Electronic Arts (01753 549442)

DUKE NUKEM 3D (93)

The debate rages on, and there are still an awful lot of people who rate *Duke* over *Quake*. It's not as technically impressive, but brags gameplay by the bucketload in one-player mode and when played over a network.

Publisher:
Eidos Interactive (0181 636 3000)

PRIVATEER 2: THE DARKENING (94)

The ultimate mix of space combat, *Elite*-style trading and FMV action, *Privateer 2* was the first big budget release from Origin to use live action in a positive way. Packed with stars, this is pukka stuff.

Publisher:
Origin/EA (01753 549442)

MAGIC CARPET 2 (92)

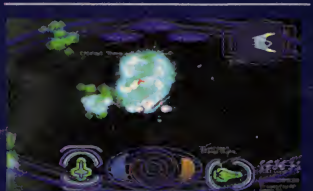
The original wooed us with its speed and smoothness – this is even better, with new night-time bits, monsters and a very useful on-line help system. Technically exquisite, the game engine's yet to be bettered.

Publisher:
Bullfrog/EA (01753 549442)

TIE FIGHTER (94)

Still rated by many as the finest space combat sim ever released, it successfully blends all the kudos of *Star Wars* with a wicked new engine for super-fast *TIE* on *X-Wing* fisticuffs.

Publisher:
LucasArts/VIE (0171 368 2255)



WING COMMANDER: PROPHECY (88)

Wing Prophecy is far more linear than *Privateer 2*, but still packs an almighty gaming punch in the grolleys with its stunning sci-fi blasting action, dazzling special effects and ever-twisting storyline.

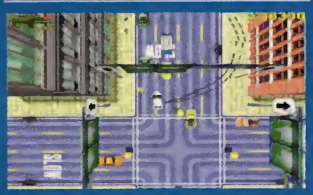
Publisher:
Electronic Arts (01753 549442)

Driving

CARMAGEDDON (95)
Awesome arcade-style racer that's heavy on the hit 'n' run and gameplay. Loads of different cars to choose from, plenty of tracks, three ways to play and a fab multi-player network mode make this one of the most entertaining driving games ever.
Publisher:
SCI (0171 585 3308)

NASCAR RACING 2 (92)
A worthy upgrade featuring a new, smoother 3D engine, improved opponent AI, more controllable cars, a simple single-screen car set-up and a multi-player network option. The constant stream of headset messages adds atmosphere. A racing sim fan's must.
Publisher:
Sierra (0118 920 9100)

NETWORK Q RAC RALLY (94)
The seminal rally racer from Europress is the ultimate in skiddy, slidey action. 27 (count 'em) stages, loads of cars, a fantastic eight-way network option and varied terrain and conditions make this superior to the limited *Sega Rally*. Go buy it!
Publisher:
Europress Software (01625 859444)



GRAND THEFT AUTO (92)
This is the game that took over from *Carmageddon* as the media's favourite pet hate. Steal cars, dodge police, mow down pedestrians and cause mayhem in city streets in one of the most addictive driving games ever. *Micro Machines* on acid.
Publisher:
BMG (0171 384 7100)

MICRO MACHINES 2 (93)
The console classic is converted to the PC as new tracks provide a new challenge. The easy-to-use control system means it's user-friendly for the uninitiated. This version comes with a track designer.
Publisher:
Codemasters (01926 814132)

SCREAMER RALLY (91)
The *Screamer* games just get better. This is by far the best version, with its mad undulating tracks and high-speed courses. As well as 3Dfx support and network play, there's also a split-screen option.
Publisher:
VIE (0171 368 2255)

F1 RACING SIMULATION (93)
The sheer depth of realism is what makes *F1 Racing Sim* such an outstanding experience to play. Not only that, but it looks an absolute treat too – especially 3Dfx-ed up. A Crammond-beater.
Publisher:
Ubi Soft (0181 944 9000)

POD (90)
One of the first racing games to support 3Dfx, Direct3D and MMX. With awesome graphics and with new cars, tracks and power-ups promised to be posted regularly on the Internet, you'll never get bored.
Publisher:
Ubi Soft (0181 944 9000)

FORMULA 1 GRAND PRIX 2 (92)
The amazing sequel to the greatest F1 driving sim ever. Updated brilliantly for the 94/95 season with all-new detailed circuits, cars and teams. Ninja Pentium needed to run the hi-res mode – but it's still great.
Publisher:
MicroProse (01454 893893)

INDYCAR 2 (90)
If you don't mind going round and round in circles but still crave that unbelievable detail, this is the only real alternative to *F1GP2*. Technically mind-blowing, though a little chuggy on anything but a high-end Pentium in SVGA mode.
Publisher:
Sierra (0118 920 9100)

Sports

LINKS LS (94)
The classic golf sim gets an update, and unsurprisingly it's fab. There's more options, luscious graphics, a redesigned menu and a view selection system. There's even a built-in upgrader for all the old data disk courses you splashed out on.
Publisher:
Eidos Interactive (0181 636 3000)

PRO PINBALL: TIMESHOCK! (91)
Remember *Pro Pinball: The Web*? This, the second table in the series, is better in every way. Improved ball dynamics, detail and sound effects, and of course there's the return of the world's dirtiest computer game voice telling you to "Lock those balls".
Publisher:
Empire Interactive (0181 343 7337)

NHL 98 (94)
Another year, another *NHL*, but this one isn't just the best ice hockey game, it's one of the best sports games we've ever seen. Super 3Dfx-ed graphics, fantastic animation and awesome presentation make this a sports title not to be missed.
Publisher:
EA Sports (01753 549442)

VIRTUAL POOL 2 (90)
Okay, so *Virtual Pool 2* scored one per cent less than its predecessor, but this follow-up beats it hands down. 3Dfx support goes some way to pushing the series further, and the inclusion of English Pub rules make it a more essential purchase than before.
Publisher:
Interplay (01628 423666)

PGA TOUR PRO (94)
Nothing really distinguishes this version from the last, except for the brilliant and very easy to use Internet play facility. Waste no time, go and thwack some Americans now. Your country needs you.
Publisher:
EA Sports (01753 549442)

ACTUA SOCCER 2 (90)
Instantly accessible footy action in this latest instalment of Gremlin's high profile *Actua* series. Great graphics, easy control and a hidden Super Furry Animals team confirm *Actua 2*'s 'must have' status.
Publisher:
Gremlin Interactive (01142 753423)

NBA LIVE 97 (92)
Much better than the previous version (which lacked drive), this offering is very well put together. Excellent graphics, sound effects and a totally hip soundtrack – it really does play as good as it looks.
Publisher:
EA Sports (01753 549442)

SENSIBLE SOCCER 2000 (90)
Can the best get better? In this case: yes. Sensible sensibly decided to leave the gameplay intact for this version of their classic game. Result? A classic update of the most playable footie game ever.
Publisher:
GT Interactive (0171 258 3791)

PETE SAMPRAS TENNIS 97 (92)
This game doesn't quite better *Super Tennis* on the SNES, but it's as close as you'll get on the PC. The simple control system means it's instantly playable, but we may as well tell you now that the women's skirts still don't fly up when they serve.
Publisher:
Codemasters (01926 814132)

MADDEN NFL 98 (87)
This latest PC incarnation is well up to the quality seen on the console versions, with all the features and slick presentation we now expect as standard for an EA Sports release. When it comes down to it, it doesn't really get any better than this.
Publisher:
EA Sports (01753 549442)

Adventures

ALONE IN THE DARK 3 (95)
Better than the previous *AITD* instalments, *Alone 3* is a tense, ambient tale of Navajo Indian magic and reincarnation that unfolds in the usual *AITD* manner. Now available as part of a compilation budget pack.
Publisher:
Infogrames (0181 738 8199)

INDIANA JONES AND THE FATE OF ATLANTIS (93)
Follow a post-*Raiders* Indy in his search for the submerged metropolis. Three ways to play make for a high replayability factor, and the inter-character banter is brilliant.
Publisher:
LucasArts/VIE (0171 368 2255)

BIOFORGE (95)
Futuristic *Alone In The Dark*-style game with impressive graphics, puzzles and soundtrack. Often preferred over *AITD* games as its unique blend of arcade combat is explosive. The only drag is EA's refusal to make a sequel for it.
Publisher:
Electronic Arts (01753 549442)

LBA 2: TWINSEN'S ODYSSEY (93)
Twinsen, the sprite with the egg-shaped head, is back – this time to thwart those pesky Esmers in this sumptuous sequel. The huge play area, coupled with seamlessly linked puzzles, creates a great looking and atmospheric adventure.
Publisher:
Electronic Arts (01753 549442)

SYSTEM SHOCK (95)
This futuristic first-person cyberpunk adventure from the makers of *Ultima* was initially overlooked by many people. Now available on budget, this is a must-buy for those new to the game. The graphics might be a little dated, but the atmosphere is invigorating.
Publisher:
Electronic Arts (01753 549442)

SAM & MAX (93)
Steve Purcell's hilarious dog/rabbit 'freelance police' duo's first and only PC outing, in which they need to solve a host of bizarre puzzles. An all-talkie adventure with a gag-laden script, this is an essential budget-priced purchase even if you're not a massive point-and-click fan.
Publisher:
LucasArts/VIE (0171 368 2255)

STAR TREK TNG: A FINAL UNITY (94)
A style oozer. At times it's as if you're inside a *Star Trek: TNG* episode. Non-linear and beautifully presented, it's a Trek-head must-buy. Yet to be bettered.
Publisher:
MicroProse (01454 893893)

THE CURSE OF MONKEY ISLAND (92)
The third game in LucasArts' classic *Monkey* saga delivers the goods big-time, much to the relief of adventure fans everywhere.
Publisher:
Virgin (0171 368 2255)

DISCWORLD II (93)
Perfect Entertainment's immaculate sequel to *Discworld* follows would-be wizard Rincewind in his search for the Grim Reaper. Not as hard as the first game, but bigger and better looking. *Discworld II* is a universally appealing adventure game.
Publisher:
Psygnosis (0151 282 3000)

ECSTATICA II (90)
We dubbed it "An adventure with balls". It's hard, but it's one of the most rewarding adventures that we've ever seen. It constantly surprises and is sure to keep even the most battle-weary adventure fan busy for weeks.
Publisher:
Psygnosis (0151 282 3000)

Role-Playing Games

ULTIMA UNDERWORLD 2: LABYRINTH OF WORLDS (94)
This improves on almost every aspect of its prequel, *The Stygian Abyss*. You explore a complex, ever-evolving dungeon; it has unsurpassed atmosphere and interaction.
Publisher:
Origin/EA (01753 549442)

TERRIS (88)
A MUD in the old-school style of text-based RPGs, but so addictive we're still playing it. The quests, puzzles and monsters will keep you going for days. The gameplay is excellent, if you can handle the 'texty-ness'.
Publisher:
AOL (0800 279 7444)

REALMS OF THE HAUNTING (93)
Although overlooked by many fans of the genre, our Mallo gave it a whopping 93 per cent when he reviewed it some months ago. Still well worth a look if you happen to see it going cheap, *ROTH* is a well cool mix of adventure and RPG.
Publisher:
Gremlin Interactive (01142 753423)

MERIDIAN 59 (86)
This ground-breaking on-line RPG allows thousands of people to interact with each other in the same fantasy universe at the same time. Garish and horrible graphics aside, it's one of the best on-line multi-player RPGs around.
Publisher:
3DO Company (0181 296 1949)

LANDS OF LORE: GUARDIANS OF DESTINY (92)
Four long years in the making, Westwood Studios' mammoth new adventure proved more than worth the wait. Sumptous visuals and a tremendous atmosphere combine to make *Lands Of Lore* an undeniable instant classic.
Publisher:
VIE (0171 368 2255)

RAVENLOFT: STONE PROPHET (78)
A great improvement over SSI's previous AD&D *Ravenloft* RPGs, the player has to battle his way through a landscape populated by Stone Golems and vicious scorpions. The graphics are average but the intuitive spell/combat system is a joy.
Publisher:
Mindscape (01444 246333)

ULTIMA VII (89)
Arguably the best of all the *Ultima* games, *Ultima VII* blends character interaction and the exploration of the world of Britannia. The last *Ultima* series to give complete party control. Soon to be *Ultima Online*.
Publisher:
Origin/EA (01753 549442)

ULTIMA UNDERWORLD: THE STYGIAN ABYSS (PRE-PC ZONE)
This took RPGs away from first-person tile-based RPGs. Amazing architecture, witty characterisations, layers of storyline and the best ending of any game in history.
Publisher:
Origin/EA (01753 549442)

DIABLO (88)
Standard hack 'n' slash fare, but it's pulled off with such style that the overall game experience is addictive. A great storyline compensates for repetitive arcade combat and supremely detailed animation makes it a superb coffee-table game.
Publisher:
Zablac/Blizzard (01626 332233)

EYE OF THE BEHOLDER II (PRE-PC ZONE)
An 'olde-worlde' first-person RPG, but its progressive, party-based gameplay and subtle story elements set it apart from the other dross. The flick-screen graphics are dated, but dungeon design's worth a look.
Publisher:
VIE (0171 368 2255)

Strategy

DUNGEON KEEPER (96)
A game with a genre almost impossible to define, *DK* takes *SimCity 2000*, *C&C* and *Ultima Underworld* and remoulds them into one hell of a title. Fantastic gameplay, and a lifespan on a par with the Queen Mother.
Publisher:
Electronic Arts (01753 549442)

INCUBATION (94)
Deeply atmospheric turn-based strategy game with graphics to die for. This is a welcome change from the endless stream of *C&C* clones and is as challenging as it's action-packed.
Publisher:
Blue Byte (01604 232200)

SYNDICATE WARS (95)
One of the best strategy games of all time gets a sequel, and what a fabulous sequel it is too. It houses a wealth of intricate levels, gorgeous graphics and enough gratuitous violence to keep anyone happy.
Publisher:
EA/Bullfrog (01753 549442)

AGE OF EMPIRES (94)
Think of *Civilization 2*. Imagine the same great empire-building gameplay, some excellent graphical touches and comprehensive multi- and single-player options (all in real time). That's *Age Of Empires* in a nutshell.
Publisher:
Microsoft (0345 002000)

X-COM 3: APOCALYPSE (95)
A revamped engine and a healthy helping of real-time combat have brought the fantastically addictive *X-COM* series bang up to date. If you like your strategy games deep and meaningful, you should buy *X-COM 3* immediately. It'll keep you busy for weeks.
Publisher:
MicroProse (01454 893893)

SIMCITY 2000 (92)
A classic game that deserves its reputation as one of the all-time greats in the strategy world. Build and maintain the city of your dreams and cope with all the problems a real-life Mayor would come up against. It's a lot more fun than it sounds, trust us.
Publisher:
Maxis (0171 505 1500)

COMMAND & CONQUER: RED ALERT (94)
...or *C&C* in SVGA with a few new units. It's a testament to the original's gameplay that the sequel can get away with adding few new features and still be fun to play.
Publisher:
Virgin (0171 368 2255)

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 97/98 (90)
The best football management game ever gets its seasonal update and a few added extras – you can now play a number of leagues simultaneously, and change stats.
Publisher:
Eidos Interactive (0181 636 3000)

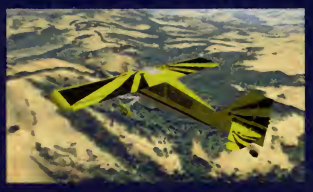
PUZZLE BOBBLE (94)
We can't agree exactly where *Puzzle Bobble* fits in *PC Zone Recommends*. Does it belong in here, with the *Civs* and *Sims* of the PC gaming world, or should it go in the action section? Who cares, as long as it's in...
Publisher:
GT Interactive (0171 258 3791)

CIVILIZATION 2 (90)
Explore the world, conquer territories and research new technologies in one of the most successful strategy games ever. It's not that different to the first one, but it merits a '90s update and a place here.
Publisher:
MicroProse (01454 893893)

Flight Simulations

EF2000 (97)
With fantastic graphics and a very realistic flight model, this is one of the best flight sims on the PC. Not even Microsoft's mighty *Flight Sim* can topple it from the top of the *PC Zone* prop-head ladder.
Publisher:
Ocean/DID (0161 832 6633)

US MARINE FIGHTERS (92)
Lovely graphics and a realistic enough flight model. Originally released as a mission disk for *US Navy Fighters*, *Marine Fighters* now comes as part of the *US Navy Fighters Gold* pack, so go get that instead!
Publisher:
Electronic Arts (01753 549442)



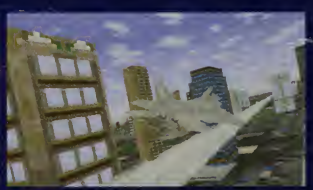
FLIGHT UNLIMITED (96)
This was the first flight sim to sport truly amazing graphics and a frighteningly realistic flight model. You don't get to kill anyone (just like *Flight Sim 95*) but it still stands up well against today's competition, and you still need a beefy machine to fly it.
Publisher:
Looking Glass/Virgin (0171 368 2255)

FLYING CORPS (92)
Action-packed WWI flight sim with neato graphics. Nostalgic gamers will recall *Red Baron* as one of the greatest WW1 flight sims ever – this improves on the old classic to become the best WW1 sim currently available for the PC.
Publisher:
Empire Interactive (0181 343 7337)

SU27 FLANKER (95)
One for flight sim purists only. Admittedly the graphics are crap, but our reviewer raved about it. A great flight model and superb mission builder make it an essential buy for prop-heads the world over, just don't expect your best mate to be impressed.
Publisher:
Mindscape (01444 246333)

COMANCHE 3 (92)
This latest version of the *Comanche* flight sim is without a doubt the finest we've seen yet, sporting juicy terrain graphics due to a revamped VoxelSpace engine. Despite an accurate flight model, it still delivers intense gameplay, and is extremely good fun.
Publisher:
NovaLogic (0171 405 1777)

FLIGHT SIM '98 (94)
Another year, and yet another flight sim from Microsoft. However, this time, with two new aircraft, a helicopter, hundreds of new airports and impressive 3D acceleration, it's really worth having.
Publisher:
Microsoft (0345 002000)



JETFIGHTER III (91)
The follow-up to one of the most popular sims ever. Fly over three and a half million square miles of accurately-mapped terrain of South America. You get to shoot things too, but there's no duty free option.
Publisher:
Eidos Interactive (0181 636 3000)

LONGBOW 2 (92)
"*Longbow 2* is challenging, beautiful, exciting and fun – if you're 3Dfx'd up," said Tim in his recent review (issue 59). If you have no extra graphics hardware: think once, think twice, think 'upgrade'. It'll be worth the investment.
Publisher:
Electronic Arts (01753 549442)

A-10 CUBA! (90)
Functional graphics (cough) for a game that captures the imagination, mainly because the plane is an absolute joy to fly. Slightly limited with the absence of a fully-fledged campaign but great fun nonetheless, and pretty speedy on a modest Pentium.
Publisher:
Activision (01895 456700)

Comment

Charlie Brooker reckons it's high time we stopped judging games by numbers.

Numerology breeds contempt

IF PUSHED, DO YOU RECKON YOU COULD AWARD yourself a numerical rating, a percentage score out of a hundred? Let's see now... you're not too ugly, but you're hardly an Adonis. We'll give you a 70 for looks. And as for personality... well, you're *fairly* popular, but the number of birthday cards you receive dwindles with each passing year... so we'll call that a 65, okay? Now let's repeat the process for every single facet of your being, from your intelligence to your sense of humour, via your grasp of morals and sense of compassion. Eventually, we'll arrive at an average number. That's you that is. That's your score. Does it accurately summarise your entire worth? Would you like to be judged by others on the strength of that mark alone? No? Funny that.

***Grand Theft Auto, Dungeon Keeper, Quake II* and *Age of Empires* – they're all completely identical. Apparently.**

> ***"Would you like to be judged by others on the strength of a percentage? No? Funny that."***

Percentage scores. Percentage sodding scores. I hate them. If I had my way (which I don't, even when carrying a bat), *PC Zone* wouldn't carry any scores at all. Scrapping the numbers would save us all a lot of hassle. No more whining letters from our more simple-minded readers, enquiring why *Gritty Fist IV* got a lower mark than *Gritty Fist III* even though the review said it was a better game. Ditch the ratings and who knows, maybe somebody, somewhere would actually *pay attention* to the write-up, rather than just gawping mindlessly at the screenshots and memorising the number on the bottom-right of the page.

Ten years ago, the ritual of numerically rating each game made sense. For one thing, the audience was unfamiliar with much of the content. There weren't many established genres and, by virtue of the primitive technology involved, most games were too oblique and surreal to be adequately *described* – let alone scrutinised – within the confines of a 500-word review. Summing them up with a percentage was simply the most effective way of conveying critique. What's more, back in 1984, the average player was far younger than today's digital diversioneer. Back then, he was a geeky schoolkid with lank, greasy hair, a smattering of pimples, a masturbatory crush on Maggie Philbin and a rubber-keyed Sinclair ZX Spectrum. The poor bastard *needed* a few no-nonsense numbers to help him make sense of it all. As a result, early games mags suffered from chronic numerological fixation; every aspect of the title under discussion received a separate rating – one mark for the graphics, another for the sound, another for 'addictive qualities' and so on. The average review resembled a Top Trumps card.

Nowadays, the gaming public is slightly more sophisticated. We can read long words without breaking into a sweat (unless, perhaps, the long word in question is 'cunnilingus'). More significantly, the games themselves have become increasingly sophisticated too – the number of different genres, styles and modes of execution makes a mockery of the concept of summing each up with a mark. There are many, *many* titles which don't warrant a 'Classic' rating, yet still contain plenty of interest. So don't write off a game just because it hasn't been awarded a score of 90 or above. If you like the concept, and the review is essentially positive, the chances are you'll lap it up. If the review says it's crap, well, ignore it.

It's 1998, for pity's sake. According to Nostradamus (crazy name, crazy guy), we'll all be dead in 12 months' time, victims of the coming apocalypse. Can we *really* afford to waste this much time debating *numbers*? You can't compare *Grand Theft Auto* to *Dungeon Keeper*. You can't compare *Quake II* to *Age Of Empires*. They're fantastic games but they're all completely different – you can't measure them with the same ruler. Don't look at the numbers. Read the review itself. Decide whether you still like the sound of the title. And *then* go out and spend your hard-earned money. With confidence.

Is *Ultima Online* ultimately a rip-off? Is *Age Of Empires* all work and no gameplay? Chris Anderson discovers why your right hand truly is your best friend...

WORD PROCESSOR

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NB: We at *PC Zone* reserve the right to edit, change and rewrite any correspondence to make ourselves appear smug, witty and intelligent.

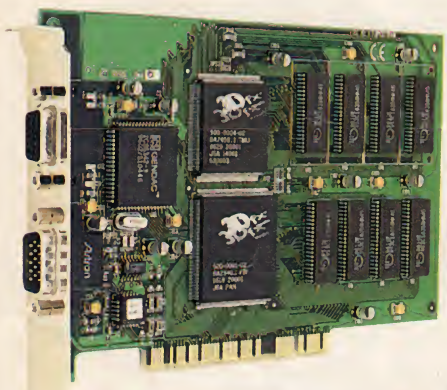
I LOVE VOODOO

I don't believe it – still no review of *I-War* in the January issue of *PC Zone*, even though it was released at the end of November (and you previewed it). What gives? I wanted to know how it compared to *Wing Commander: Prophecy*.

As for what seems to be your love affair with VideoLogic's (deliberately and misleadingly named) 3Dx – it's cheaper than the 3Dfx Voodoo cards, but the 3Dfx is faster and better. What's going to happen when Voodoo 2 arrives in March, raising the barometer on performance by some 300 per cent? I'll tell you – the Voodoo 1 cards will drop to the price of PowerVR, and everyone will buy a better and faster Voodoo 1 in preference to a PowerVR card, while Voodoo 2 will dominate the high end. 'Nuff said...

John, e-mail

Sorry John, I-War came in too late for inclusion in the January issue. We're not entirely sure where you got this 'love affair with VideoLogic' idea from – all the 3Dfx cards in this month's feature fared better than their PowerVR counterparts. Yes, you're right – Voodoo 1 cards will match the price of current PowerVR cards early next year to make way for Voodoo 2, but you seem to forget that PowerVR will also have moved on to their next-generation chipsets by then, and who knows what they'll come up with? We'll have more news on the next-generation 3D cards in the next two issues, so keep 'em peeled.



The 3D debate continues. Which is the best: 3Dfx or PowerVR? This month's feature will hopefully help you to decide.

HE'S BARKING MAD

After reading your review of *Age Of Empires*, I couldn't wait to play it. At first I thought yeah, this is good! But once I got into it, I found it about as flawed as another Microsoft product we're all forced to use *(Microsoft Soccer? – Ed)*.

What went wrong – who reviewed it? How could you give it 94 per cent? Because it looks good, or maybe because of its originality? The gameplay's certainly not up to much: no set formations, no AI, infuriating little troops going everywhere but the place you sent them (little bastards, I hate 'em). Where's the battlefield? You spend two or more hours struggling your nuts off building, building, building, only to send all your troops in for a free-for-all slugfest. Where's the strategy?

Changing the subject, I recently joined the 3D card revolution and bought the Apocalypse 3Dx. I feel I must complain about the lack of PowerVR demos supported on your cover disk. Could you rectify this, please? Great mag by the way.

M Barrett, Norwich, Norfolk

You're in the overwhelming minority if you don't like Age Of Empires, *which means of course that you're also totally wrong. I wrote the review, and am still playing the thing months later.*

Where's the strategy, you say – that depends how you play the game. I have my suspicions that you're playing it on the easy level which allows you to build lots of stuff and wade in and clean up C&C-style. Try the normal or expert levels and see how far you get. For the record, I'm willing to fight anyone who doesn't recognise Age Of Empires *as one of the most playable and addictive games ever. Yes, fight. Using my hands. And feet.*

On the demo front, most of the demos we run support PowerVR through Direct3D. There aren't many native PowerVR games out there, so we can't run native demos. Soz, but don't blame us – blame PowerVR.

LEFT IN THE COLD

First of all, let me say that your magazine is excellent, especially the cover discs and reviews. However, I have a slight

Months have passed and we're *still* playing *Age Of Empires*. Why? 'Cos it's totally fab and addictive – and we'll take on anyone who says differently.

No joy for left-handers: unfair advantage in the cockpit.

problem you may be able to help me with.

One of my favourite games is *X-Wing Vs TIE Fighter*. After having completed most of the single-player games, I decided to try one against a mate. Anyway, he brings his PC round with his flash flightstick and wipes the floor with me – probably because I only had my gamepad, which doesn't give very good control of the ships. So the next day I set off into town to look for a joystick of my own to rival my mate's and no doubt improve my cockpit skills. As you can probably imagine, being left-handed proves to be a bit of a problem at this stage, as all flightstick controllers are designed for right-handed people.

Please could you tell me if there are any left-handed joysticks available, and if so, who makes them? Thanks.

Mark Duhm, Ipswich, Suffolk

Well, I've asked around the office and phoned a few joystick companies, but I'm afraid I didn't get very far. None of the manufacturers I spoke to make left-handed joysticks. To be brutally frank, the fact that only about 10 per cent of the population is left-handed means that manufacturers would have to go to great expense to produce alternative versions of their sticks for a comparatively low return.

Having said that, if any readers out there know where Mark can possibly get hold of a left-handed joystick or flightstick, or if any manufacturers reading this have one for sale, why not drop us a note with the full gen? Go on, you know you want to.

NO PAY, NO PLAY

Hey, guys! *Ultima Online* is great – if you're prepared to pay. I bought it from Virgin Megastore in Leeds, but when I got it home and took a look at the bottom of the box to see what the system requirements were I found a nasty yellow sticker saying "valid credit card required for game installation". I installed the game and found that although they give you a free month's play, when that's over you have to pay $9.00 a month (roughly £6.00) for another month. Having already paid £44.99 for the game, I think it's a disgusting rip-off and am therefore warning anyone thinking of buying it to seriously consider the extra monthly costs. On a slightly happier note, apart from the outlay, this really is a great game.

Daniel Kay, Huddersfield

Okay readers, consider yourselves warned. If you decide to buy Ultima Online *you'll have to pay £6 per month to play it. But come on Daniel, if you love the game that much, surely it's a small price to pay for playing the game on-line against people all over the world? Honestly, this country...*

***Ultima Online*: okay, so you have to pay a small monthly charge on top of the price of the game itself, but we reckon it's well worth it.**

Letter of the month

SPOILT FOR CHOICE

I found Ciaran Brennan's article in issue 59 of your great magazine very interesting – indeed, it encouraged me to write this letter.

I feel there's no great mystery concerning the question of how disappointing PC game sales are compared to their console counterparts. PlayStation and Nintendo owners are desperate for any decent titles that come along. The amount of dire products for Sony's baby is overwhelming, while every Nintendo 64 owner has only around five games to choose from (and I don't care how good they are). And yet if you take a quick look through any PlayStation magazine, you'll be hard pressed to find a score below 80 per cent. The reviewers appear to have conditioned themselves to give any half-passable game a good mark – perhaps out of sheer relief of having played one.

Compare this to the huge and varied catalogue PC owners have before them. I walked into Game the other day and had to make a choice between (deep breath) *GTA*, *Actua Soccer 2*, *Blade Runner*, *I-War*, *F-22*, *Monkey Island 3* and *Quake II*. *Jedi Knight* may have sold only 18,000 copies, but that's not bad-going considering it was competing with all the games I've just mentioned.

People with PlayStations will buy any game that scores well, while Nintendo owners will buy anything just to increase their pathetic collection.

Anyway, keep up the good work.

Martin Crilly, Belfast

The high-scoring reviews in console mags are certainly a factor in the enormous sales of PlayStation and Nintendo games, but so is the fact that many of the titles written for consoles are aimed at young gamers and not the older audience the PC typically attracts.

There's also the price-point to consider. You can buy a PSX or N64 for £100, so parents aren't likely to say no to little Johnny when he asks for one of these machines for Christmas. What would they say if their little terror playfully requested a P200 with 32Mb RAM? The answer, we think, would be two words.

Also, Ciaran's point that the PC is still too scary a prospect for casual gamers due to its technical nature is a well-made one, although this could change if publishers follow his cue and come up with a viable standard for all PC games.

In the meantime, don't lose too much sleep over which machine is selling more games than the other, just be grateful that you've got the best games machine on earth, and the widest selection of games to play on it. Long may it reign.

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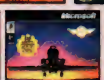

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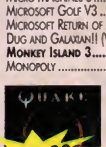

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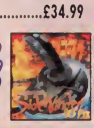

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STOP LOOKING BACK

Richie Shoemaker sorts through the mountain of post-Christmas debris and finds *Quake II* alive and well, plus a couple of other survivors that really should have been left out in the snow.

IT'S A TYPICALLY FREEZING JANUARY MORNING, the type to transform plums to raisins if you venture out yo-yo's a go-go. Everyone in the office has the same vacant look that only festive over-indulgence can induce. Littered around us are coffee-stained Christmas cards and, nearby, a mound of unclaimed presents. Among them there's a Santa's sock half-full of wrinkled clementines and a single pair of *Comanche 3* boxer shorts, compliments of NovaLogic.

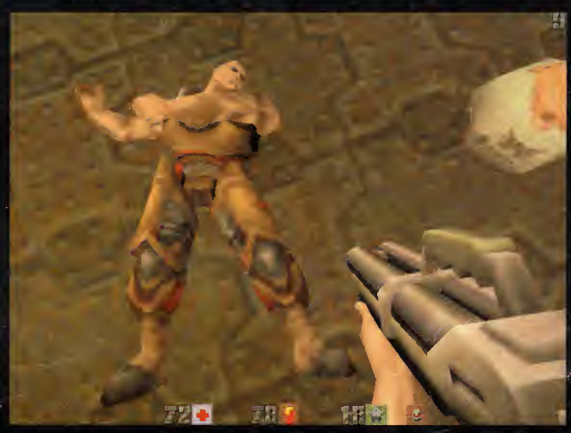
Our gracious lord and master, Jeremy, managed to avoid most of the alcohol-fuelled Crimbo preamble by stealing himself and his little geordie princess away to open their presents on foreign shores. On his return the office laptop and a copy of *CM2* mysteriously reappeared, though Jeremy admits nothing and is quietly spending the new year catching up with a certain 3D action game that the rest of us have become all too familiar with of late.

Without a doubt iD's latest masterpiece is responsible for taking up almost everyone's spare time. Charlie Brooker says he's been playing *Quake II* followed by more *Quake II*, breaking off only to take in and expel various fluids. Macca completed it on its hardest level before most people had even finished installing it, and as a result is now waiting for some decent multi-player maps to appear. News Ed Mallo has also succumbed to its gruesome charms and is particularly taken by a level featuring some captured marines requiring a merciful release. He's recently moved into a new bachelor pad, and has since become rather smitten with gaming's darker side; he can often be heard snorting with delight at the amount of gore flying about in Bungie's *Myth: The Fallen Lords*.

Apart from losing 50 per cent of his body weight in a barber's chair, Paul Presley has also been hacking about in *Myth* – but he's keen to stress "multi-player only". He's still to try out the computer opponent, but finds playing against other people a great laugh. As well as that, he's been flying about novaworld.net in his *F-22 Raptor* and has found the experience most agreeable, though he refused to take the aforementioned NovaLogic's pants home as a trophy.

Much of Chris' time has been spent manning the helm in Jeremy's absence. Our Dep Ed is another one keen to try out NovaLogic's *Raptor* although – and don't be too surprised at this – he prefers to play yet more *Age Of Empires*, which he says "has the highest replay rate of any game ever". Always with his finger in a multitude of gaming pies, Chris is also forging ahead in Westwood's near-classic adventure *Blade Runner*, which Disc Editor Gareth Ramsay managed to complete in only two days.

Steve Hill's been rambling on about the time-consuming nature of attending so many 'showbiz parties'. "I haven't had time to play games," he says, "except that *other* football game you all insist on playing." He is, of course, referring to *Actua Soccer 2*, which still seems to be drawing the crowds, although Trevor Brooking's commentary is starting to wear a bit thin.



"My mission is to finally convert my girlfriend to the religion of playing games."

Noticeable by his recent absence, Patrick McCarthy seems to have avoided Christmas altogether and on his last visit to the *Zone* HQ admitted to not having played very many PC games at all, aside from *FIFA 98*. Most of his time has been spent playing *Goldeneye* on his N64, which he simply describes as "good". Before leaving to face the elements Patrick took a shine to a certain undergarment, which we gladly gave him along with the phone number to obtain more.

As for me, I'm rather pleased at having survived my first Christmas at *Zone* scarred only by a manageable drinking habit and an expanded waistline courtesy of too many lunches. Above all my tolerance for crap games seems to have gone into a steep decline, so things are coming along very nicely.

Quake II has to be my game of choice at the moment, though I'm rather ashamed to admit to playing, of all things, *Star Wars Monopoly*. Yes, I know it's a bit of a slapper but I've only just got my girlfriend off *Solitaire* and on to *Minesweeper*. My mission is to finally convert her to the religion of games playing. Within a year she'll be playing *Quake II* and yes, I'll probably live to regret it. Still you have to try, don't you? Z

(Bottom) **Something you never thought anyone would admit to playing – *Star Wars Monopoly*.**

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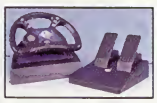

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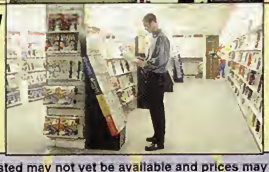

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